

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRED DRESSLER:

A CONTRIBUTION TO A SURVEY OF LIFE IN CARSON VALLEY, FROM FIRST SETTLEMENT THROUGH THE 1950S

Interviewee: Fred Dressler

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Description

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While Carson Valley retained its essential pastoral quality, some significant economic and social changes occurred well into the twentieth century. The railroad came and withdrew; automotive technology transformed agriculture; careful water management permitted most of the valley to be placed under cultivation; Washoe Indians established (with federal assistance) their own community named after their benefactors, the Dressler family; and the population of the valley grew tenfold.

Fred Dressler is a descendant of some of Carson Valley's earliest settlers, and he operates one of its oldest and most successful ranches. In this 1984 interview he focuses a keen mind and excellent powers of observation on several topics important to understanding the history of the area. Dressler's pioneering grandparents passed on to him an impression of nineteenth century life in the valley, and he recalls that here. Agriculture and ranching receive a detailed treatment, and there is a discussion of some of the buildings, businesses and citizens of the southern valley of the early twentieth century. Of particular interest are recollections of Washoe ways and individual Washoe Indians. For over one hundred years the Dressler family employed Washoe on their ranch, and Washoe families resided on Dressler land well into the twentieth century.

When Fred Dressler recalls the events and places of his early life, he speaks from a past that is deeper than the dates suggest. Until the Great Depression and the social, political and technological changes that so quickly followed it, Carson Valley seemed almost fixed in time, an extension of nineteenth century rural Nevada. This oral history illuminates that period of historical foundation.

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FUNDED WITH A MATCHING GRANT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR,
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND THE NEVADA DIVISION OF
HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND ARCHEOLOGY

An Oral History Conducted by R. T. King

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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CONTENTS

Preface to the Digital Edition	ix
Original Preface	xi
Introduction	xiii
A Note on Orthography	
1. Family History and Biographical Memoir	1
2. The Dressler Ranch and Carson Valley Agriculture	37
3. Washo Indians of the Carson Valley: A Rancher's Perspective	89
4. Some Observations on Non-agricultural Pursuits in the Carson Valley	115
Photographs	125
Appendix: Memberships, Accomplishments and Awards	129
Original Index: For Reference Only	131

PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler’s meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber
Director, UNOHP
July 2012

ORIGINAL PREFACE

The University of Nevada Oral History Program (OHP) engages in systematic interviewing of persons who can provide firsthand descriptions of events, people and places that give history its substance. The products of this research are the tapes of the interviews and their transcriptions.

In themselves, oral history interviews are not history. However, they often contain valuable primary source material, as useful in the process of historiography as the written sources to which historians have customarily turned, verifying the accuracy of all of the statements made in the course of an interview would require more time and money than the OHP's operating budget permits. The program can vouch that the statements were made, but it cannot attest that they are free of error. Accordingly, oral histories should be read with the same prudence that the reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries and other sources of historical information.

It is the policy of the OHP to produce transcripts that are as close to verbatim as

possible, but some alteration of the text is generally both unavoidable and desirable. When human speech is captured in print the result can be a morass of tangled syntax, false starts and incomplete sentences, sometimes verging on incoherency. The type font contains no symbols for the physical gestures and the diverse vocal modulations that are integral parts of communication through speech. Experience shows that totally verbatim transcripts are often largely unreadable and therefore a waste of the resources expended in their production. While keeping alterations to a minimum the OHP will, in preparing a text:

- a. generally delete false starts, redundancies and the uhs, ahs and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled;
- b. occasionally compress language that would be confusing to the reader in unaltered form;
- c. rarely shift a portion of a transcript to place it in its proper context; and
- d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered

but have been added to render the text intelligible.

There will be readers who prefer to take their oral history straight, without even the minimal editing that occurred in the production of this text; they are directed to the tape recording.

Copies of all or part of this work and the tape recording from which it is derived are available from:

The University of Nevada
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INTRODUCTION

Carson Valley is a level plain 18 miles in width lying along a 30 mile stretch of the Carson River in west central Nevada. Bounded on the east by the Pine Nut Range and to the west by the towering Sierra Nevada, it is a sheltered, well watered area hospitable to a broad range of plant and animal life. In 1898, the year of Fred Dressler's birth, Carson Valley had been settled for less than 50 years and was inhabited by fewer than 1,500 people. Washo Indians, who had roamed the area for thousands of years, still made seasonal use of the valley's resources, and many of them lived part of each year on ranches where they worked as agricultural or domestic laborers. No railroads penetrated Carson Valley; there were no industries and the few communities were small and widely separated. An arcadian tranquility lay over the land.

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be placed under cultivation; Washo Indians established (with federal assistance) their own community named after their benefactors, the Dressler family; and the population of the valley grew tenfold.

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A NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

The Washo words in this text have been transcribed by William H. Jacobsen, Jr., in the phonemic system he has developed for this language. Professor Jacobsen is the acknowledged authority on Washo linguistics and has published a number of works on the subject.

An explanation of the symbols, which have standard Americanist values, is on file at the University of Nevada Oral History Program. Among the more commonly used symbols that may be unfamiliar to non-linguists:

The acute accent indicates a stressed syllable.

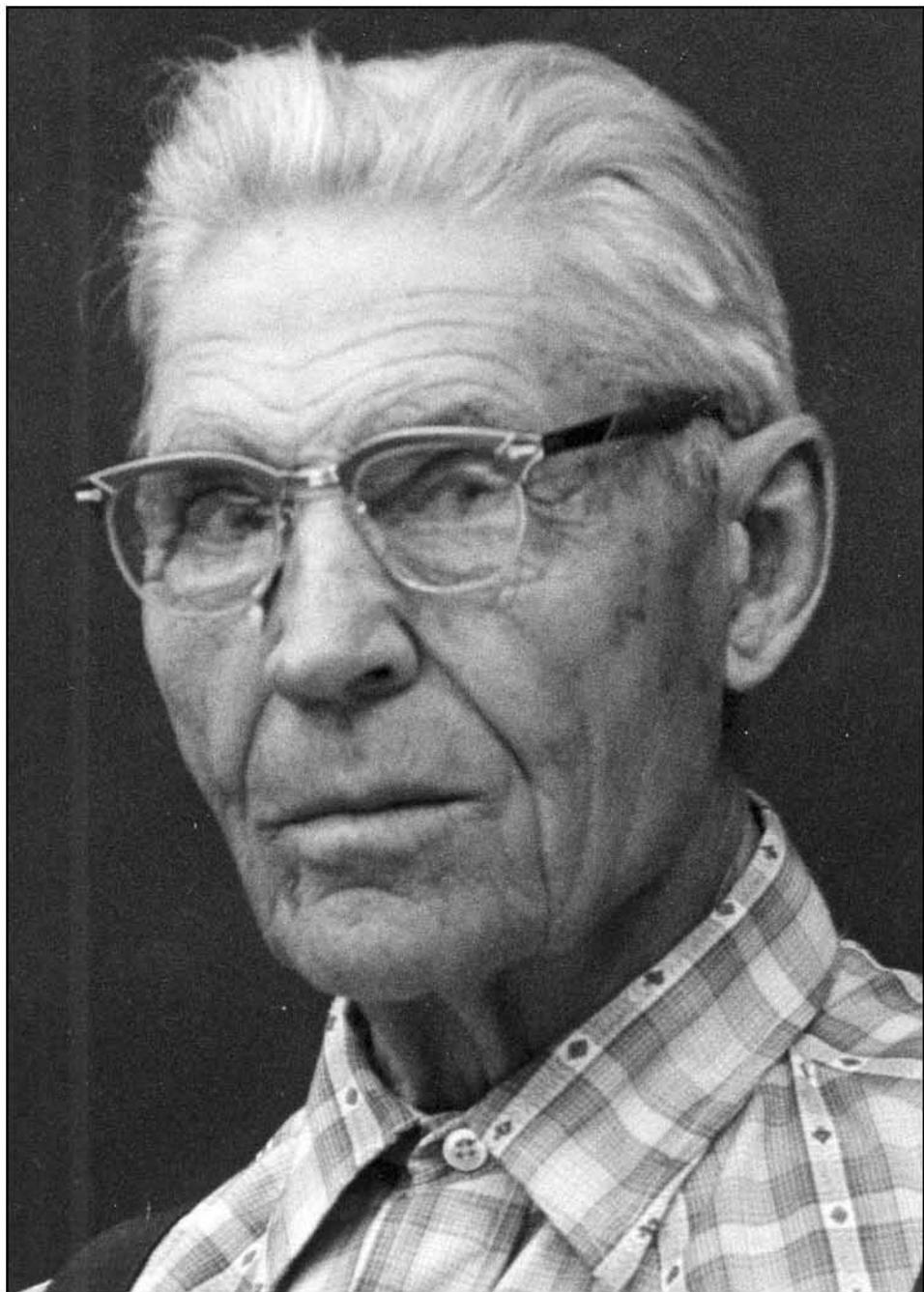
š sounds like sh in ship.

ŋ sounds like ng in sing

‘ is the symbol for the glottal stop, a quick catch in the throat. It is important to discriminate this very common Washo sound.

v sounds somewhat like u in just.

z sounds like dz in adze.



FRED DRESSLER

1984

FAMILY HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR

R. T. King: I'd like to begin by having you tell me a few things about your ancestors, and particularly about your grandparents, who were some of the first settlers in the Carson Valley. When did they come to the Carson Valley and from where?

Fred Dressler: My grandparents on my father's side, from Germany.

Do you know what part of Germany?

I think a little town by the name of Muhlhausen. I really don't know where it's located in Germany; I think around Hamburg. [It is 160 miles south of Hamburg.] We'll have to dig up some dates; I have documentary evidence other than what I have stored in my mind. But in a general sense, I knew my grandfathers and grandmothers on both sides of the family.

Let's start with your grandfather on your father's side of the family. What was his name?

His name was August Frederick. He came here in 1860 with an ox team. He was a man who didn't know how to read nor write—he could sign his name—so there's a lot of things that transpired in his life that we have no record of, and we just have to remember.

I remember things told to me by him and by my father and mother at different times during my lifetime before they moved away from here. My grandfather and grandmother moved from Carson Valley to Placerville for a while after he first retired, and lived on what they called Coloma Street in Placerville. Then they moved to Hayward, California, where they lived until they passed away.

When your grandfather came to the United States, do you know whether he had any skills or not? What was his background in Germany?

He was a clothes dyer.

That's an odd occupation to be found here in Nevada. I imagine he went first to New York City, didn't he?

Yes, he went to New York City and Long Island, where he worked on a farm. He took into agriculture everything that's evidenced by his life and what he had left behind him. From Long Island, New York, he went to Minnesota and homesteaded in Minnesota. Then from there he drove his ox team on a 6-months trip across the plains out here. He told me that when he crossed what they call the Forty-Mile Desert (that's out in an area east of Fallon), he endured quite a bit of hardship, and there was very little water. They were running out of water, and he stooped down and drank rain water in the wagon tracks behind the wagon.

Did he tell you why he decided to leave his homestead in Minnesota and come to Nevada?

Well, he heard about the gold rush, and he said that Minnesota was colder than he liked; he didn't like the cold. He made a comment to me one time; he said, "It's cold enough in Minnesota to freeze the horns off the cows. So he sought other areas.

He was headed to California, he and a partner. When they got to Carson Valley, he had endured a lot of this hardship, and it seemed to be a thriving area on account of the Virginia City mines. Mines were being developed, and the community was thrifty and offered opportunity for work, and he went to work for a Mormon bishop by the name of D. R. Jones. The ranch is owned right now by a man by the name of Pat Kimmerling, who's a neighbor of mine.

Was he married before he came to Nevada?

No, he wasn't. His wife came around the Horn [Cape Horn] to San Francisco and came overland on a stagecoach to Carson Valley.

Do you know about when that would have been?

We have historic documents that we can look up.

So he'd come out here as a single man.

The gold rush to California attracted him.

Did he plan to do any prospecting himself when he came out?

I don't know; I don't think so. He probably had intended to go to California. But when he came here, he went to work, and then he homesteaded after he'd been here a while working for this man Mr. Jones. He homesteaded here and built himself a log cabin and proceeded to accumulate and develop the property, and try to accumulate his fortune. He told me that he got up and made savings, and he reached \$1,000 three times before he could get past \$1,000 worth of savings. And after he got past that \$1,000, he told me he was able to take off, but it took him 3 attempts to get past \$1,000!

One time he ran a horse race, he told me, and he was thrown off the horse, broke his collar bone. And while he was gone to get medical attention—I presume Carson City; that was the nearest big town where any doctors or any medical aid could have been administered—why, when he came back, he only had one brindle cow. The rest of them had been stolen.

He was a man that never sought to accumulate a great expanse of wealth. The opportunity of expanding and accumulating land here was available, wide open. But he was a man that liked to garden; he had flowers, and he had shrubs, he had an orchard and he used

to like to hoe—prided himself in how good a hoe man he was.

My father [William F. Dressler] was a contrast. The only time he was happy was to have what he had with the idea of expanding and taking over what was next to him.

Did your grandfather ever talk to you much about working for Bishop Jones?

No, I never did get much detail. I don't think he worked more than a year or so for him.

Do you know in what capacity?

Just an ordinary farmhand. That's all there was available.

And he never gave you any details about the kind of work he did or how he was able to accumulate enough money to homestead?

Well, he was working for wages. That's as far as my knowledge reaches...just the minute detail. But in those days, people were able to accumulate by saving, and there was no income taxes; if you made something, it was yours. And the cost of living was down. And in those days, everybody lived off the land. The only thing they imported was some sugar and spices and coffee and tea.

Did he have any kind of an enterprise going on the side? Was he gardening and selling produce in Virginia City?

Yes, that afforded him an opportunity, because they could take their vegetables and whatever produce it was—they had a ready market for it—into Carson City. And from then on up into Virginia City, where the

miners were living. Of course, miners had their work and their life was in an area where they couldn't produce what they needed to eat. Then if they accumulated a few animals, they could sell the beef. There were 2 slaughterhouses in Carson; there was one in Virginia City, so anything that was produced had to be driven or hauled by teams to the point of consumption. In those days, the food had to be produced and consumed within the distance a horse-drawn vehicle could pull it. We didn't have the modern things that we have today.

So your grandfather worked for about a year for Bishop Jones and then homesteaded. Could you describe for me where the property was located, where your grandfather first homesteaded?

From where I live to where the Jones property is probably about 2½ miles to 3 miles north of me.

And your grandfather took up a piece of land adjacent to the Jones property, or did he come all the way down here? Is this the property that your grandfather originally homesteaded?

Yes. And then my grandfather, after he got started, bought out different places. I know he bought what they call the Marsh ranch; that's a piece of ground next to us. And I think he bought some other land in addition to what he homesteaded. And then as time went on, he bought a piece of property that was known as the Mack property (that's part of the land we own here right now) alongside of his homestead.

Then he owned a piece of property over at Sheridan, Nevada. That was a kind of way station where they stopped; there was a store and saloons and a blacksmith shop

and a hotel there. My grandfather owned the blacksmith shop and rented it out, and he raised vegetables and hay on the Sheridan ranch which he hauled to Carson City with teams.

About how many acres did he originally homestead?

It'd be 160.

As I understand it, the house that he built was located a couple of hundred yards to the north of the one that you're in right now.

The one where he said he had his log cabin is just about an eighth of a mile to the south and east on the edge or brow of a little rise—kind of south and east [from] where this house stands. The one I live in was built for my father and mother in probably about 1896.

But didn't your grandparents have another house?

Yes, they had a little house to the north, right straight north of us. They had a farmstead there. They had all their buildings: barn, granary, cook house, bunkhouse—everything that they needed, sheds and so forth, barn for their horses, and those kind of buildings. That was located to the north of where I live right now. But most of that's completely obliterated.

When your grandfather homesteaded after that year that he spent with Bishop Jones he was still unmarried at that time?

Yes, when he first homesteaded, that's right. Soon after he was married, I think they lived in Sheridan. But he used to live part of

the time in this location that we just talked about—north of where I live—part of the year, and then he moved to Sheridan, back and forth.

Why would he do that?

Oh, in order to manage his property.

I don't know where Sheridan is. How far away is that?

Sheridan's over on the west side of the Carson Valley. It is no more, but there was a boarding place, and there was the post office, and the stores; it was a community center for the south-central part of the Carson Valley.

Tell me what you can remember about your grandmother, beginning with where she was born, how she managed to come out here and for what reasons, and how she met your grandfather.

They were acquainted before he left Germany.

What was her maiden name?

Wilhelmina Dietz. We have pictures of her. Evidently he wrote to her and had her come over. I don't know the dates of their marriage or any of that detail.

Did she grow up on a farm, or was she a city dweller, too? Your grandfather as a dyer more than likely lived in the city in Germany, didn't he?

Well, I rather think that he probably was from the country. He probably went to the city as a boy. You know, there was a great tendency in the early days that you'd be born in the

country, and you'd go to the city. That's still a tendency in this country until we're going to empty the country and all be city people.

So he sent for her after he had the homestead?

Oh, yes. Sent for her, and was ready. We have some pictures here that can be produced as evidence. But I was too young to remember way back into the depth of some of this stuff. All I remember is what my grandfather and grandmother told me and what my parents told me.

I know that. That must have been a good 20 years at least before you were born.

My father, I think, was born in 1872, and I was born in 1898.

Some of the things you've been telling me about your grandfather suggest that he was as much of a farmer as he was a rancher. You told me that he loved to garden and was proud of his ability to hoe, and that he had a lot of vegetables and flowers and all kinds of fruit trees and things like that. How did he make that transition from farming to ranching?

Well, in order to be a rancher, you had to be a farmer in this country. We call ourselves ranchers because we're involved in producing crops to feed animals. Actually, a ranch is an animal/agriculture enterprise because it involves livestock. It might be sheep, cattle, hogs, dairy cattle or what not. And a farmer is referred to, I think, as a crop raiser. In this part of the country, you have to have a farm to produce the feed we need to feed them in the winter. You don't have winter grazing in this country. Where they have winter grazing it's called range country and ranch.

Did he have much experience with livestock prior to coming out here to Nevada? Did he ever talk about the farm that he had in Minnesota?

Yes, he said they raised corn to feed their cattle, and I think he had milk cows.

In the early days, a farm consisted of raising crops, and naturally they would have pasture for summer. People cured their own meat, killed their own pigs, and they didn't have refrigeration, so in many instances they would kill younger animals—calves, kill a pig or a lamb. And they had chickens. So they managed in those days without all this refrigeration and all the advancements that we're blessed with today.

Of course, your grandfather was faced with a completely different set of problems here in Nevada from those that he must have experienced in Minnesota or in Germany as regards raising crops and animals and so forth. Did he ever talk to you or to your father about the adjustments that he had to make when he finally decided to make a living as an agriculturist in the Carson Valley?

I don't think he gave that much thought. In those days, the opportunities that were here, they availed themselves of them and they felt their way into them. They'd come into a community, and all they had to offer was their energy, willingness to work. The opportunity was in front of them. So they adjusted without any hesitation. If it was working with sheep, why, they'd learn how to handle sheep, and the man that owned the sheep wherever they went to work would show them. In those days, they were prone to listen to the man they worked for.

Before we got to talking about the change that your grandfather had to make to ranching, we were talking about your grandma. You had

mentioned that she came around the Horn. Did she ever tell you about how long that trip took from Germany to the United States?

Let me start with my grandfather on that subject. Brings to mind what he told me. He said it took 3 weeks to a month, and the first part of the trip—about the first week out—he got violently sick. He just got seasickness; he had to stay there and ride the boat while it was rocking over the waves. He said when he first got sick he was afraid he was going to die. As he went on during the trip and during the course of the increased violence of this seasickness, he said, “I was so sick that I wished I would die, afraid I wouldn’t.” [laughter]

My grandmother...I never heard her say; I don't think she became seasick. But she must have been [on the ship] better than a month to come around the Horn. That's way down around the tip of South America, so in all probability, whatever those early-day ships took, probably had to be between a month or 2 months in a row on the way.

She never told you any stories about that trip, though?

No, I never had a chance to talk to her and visit her. That's what was said. I was a little boy in those times. They left here about the time I was born. They used to come back and forth, but they went to California—Placerville—to live in the wintertime. After my grandfather had disposed of the property amongst his children and helped them get started, he left and didn't live here steady; he'd come back in the summertime.

My grandmother was a very rugged, strong person. She used to tell me about lifting 125-pound wheat bags, throwing them up on

the wagon; helping Grandpa load the wagon with grain to haul to Carson.

I've seen photographs of your grandpa, and he was not a very tall man.

No.

Was your grandma a large woman?

She was a very sturdy and large woman—not a real tall person but a very sturdy person.

She probably was a housewife. Did she do anything else? Was she a schoolteacher or anything?

No, not to my knowledge. And of course, in that instance, the language barrier would enter.

Tell me about the German cultural heritage that your family brought to this part of the country. Did they speak German among themselves?

Yes. They'd have their German parties, and they'd associate. They built their own church here, the Lutheran church.

They had what they called the *Schutzenfest*. That was a German celebration that was pulled off down here at Waterloo. My wife and her folks participated in it. She [my wife Anna] remembers as a girl when her family used to take the kids and all go down to the *Schutzenfest*. It was a picnic and dancing and merrymaking, music and a celebration like that, that they would have, I think [in the] fall of the year after the harvest season.

Did your grandfather and grandmother speak German in the house to themselves?

Yes.

And to the children as well?

Yes.

How good was their English?

Their English was broken, but they got by real well; you could understand them. They had the accent, but they didn't stumble over words. They could talk English very able. But in many instances, their German accent was there and they didn't have their vocabulary... probably in instances you'd notice it was limited, but their intelligent conversation was very, very plain. Like most of the old-time German people that settled here, it didn't take long to learn. They took pride in learning to be an American citizen, and felt obligated to try to learn to speak English, which was the language.

Was your grandfather politically active?

Grandfather...no. Oh, he was a devout Republican. He was interested in politics to the extent that he'd vote for people that he thought were the best officers and were Republicans.

Did he ever tell you why he was a Republican and not a Democrat?

Never did, no. The Civil War hadn't started yet when he came here, and Nevada wasn't yet a state. I have a feeling that his political leaning to the Republican party probably was picked up while he was in New York...I think that happened.

Can you think of any other German traditions that may have been carried over by your

family here in the Carson Valley? What about clothing? Did they dress in the German style?

Well, when they first came they naturally had clothes that they brought from Germany, but clothes wear out so they had to use the clothes that were here. Looking at some of the clothes that are on my father and his brothers and sisters [in photographs] —they were definitely clothes that were American in those days, old-fashioned clothes. Of course, whether you were English or German, they had a certain type of pattern of clothing [that] was quite similar. But I really don't know. All I can think about and refer to is what I saw. And what I remember was people wearing American clothes.

Of course parents would make clothes.. .dresses for the girls, and sometimes they'd even make clothes for the boys...but most of that, I think, was bought in this country or made by tailors. Those days, a lot of the clothes was made by people that had tailor shops. It wasn't manufactured and shipped in.

The reason I asked is that I've seen some photographs in your collection that would lead me to believe that your grandfather at some times dressed in the German fashion, even after he'd been here in this country for quite a while. I see pictures of him wearing a cap rather than a hat.

That's right. They naturally would wear the clothes until they'd have to change and wear more Americanized [clothing]. But there was no doubt the clothing that a lot of them wore was clothing that was shipped from Germany. So they naturally clinged to their customs as long as they could. Not that they denounced anything. All these people that came over here and all the people that I associated with

and remember in childhood as a boy growing up, they took a great pride in being a citizen of the United States. They studied to comply with and pass the citizenship examination. That was great in people.

Your grandpa retired and moved to California, I believe. When would that have been?

He had to have been in the process of retiring in about 1896.

So he was still a relatively young man.

He was badly crippled with arthritis and rheumatism. He wasn't able to work any more, and I think that's what caused him to retire at the age he did.

My grandma Dressler must have been a very rugged individual because I remember hearing them talk about [her] helping Grandpa load 125-pound bags of grain on the wagon, getting it ready to take to Carson City. I think she used to help my grandfather in whatever he was doing, outside of the house and inside. I was too young to realize or know anything first handed, but I used to hear them talk.

Your grandma probably had to cook for everybody, for the hands as well as the family, didn't she?

Yes. She must have done a pretty good job of taking care and seeing that the household was maintained, and that the clothes were maintained, and things in the household kept in good order. I think that was typical of my grandparents on both sides of the family. My grandmother on my father's side was an especially vigorous, energetic and strong person. She probably went out and did a man's work or assisted men to do their work when they needed it.

Did she have chickens, turkeys, or anything like that?

I don't think so. But these womenfolks had responsibilities to see to it that the animals were taken care of, and see that things went on if the husband happened to be gone for a day or 2, or wasn't home in time or some of this sort of thing. They were a very vital part in what went on. They'd see to it that the slop was fed to the pigs—there was always slop from the kitchen—and that the milk was skimmed. Lots of the farm ladies would milk the cow for the house. They took care of a lot of the chores around the house or yard. Sometimes they'd get help. After the girls of the family would get old enough so that they could wash dishes and do chores, they stayed right alongside their mother and came right up. As they grew up they assumed more work, also.

Did your grandma have any Washo Indians working in the house with her?

Oh, yes.

Can you tell me how that system of help in the house would work?

Well, these Indian women would come and want to have a few dollars; they didn't have any money. And they'd work periodically, piece work. They'd come and work in the yard, or they'd do housework or housecleaning.

I know that your grandfather Park's name was Hugh. What was your grandmother Park's name?

Rebecca. Her maiden name was Cook. My grandparents on my mother's side came from Salt Lake. They were under the Mormon

influence in Utah. I heard my grandfather talk about driving an ox team up the Weber River Canyon to cut wood above Ogden. They first came to Dayton, Nevada.

Did they tell you why they left Utah, why they decided to come to Nevada?

I think they were a group of Mormon dissenters. I think this was a part of those folks that were settled in Genoa, and they're strung along the west, mountain stream side of the valley. It was the area that was most accessible and most available to start agriculture because these streams were steady out of the mountains, and they were easy to divert. Down on the main river, they had to put dams in. They were subject to floods and high water and all.

They came to better themselves. They first came and worked in a quartz mill down at Dayton, Nevada. Then they went over to Stockton, California, one winter and stayed over there. They didn't like the wet weather, and in those days they didn't have the malaria mosquito under control so they decided to come back. That's when they came back and took up land. There was 3 Park brothers.

These are the Parks, not the Cooks?

Yes, the Park family. My mother's mother was a Cook, and my mother's father was a Park.

Were they married in Utah?

No, they were married here in Carson Valley. My grandmother's sister was Eliza Cook. She never married, but she was the first woman doctor in the state of Nevada.

There were 3 Park brothers. There was David Park; he had a ranch. He apparently

was more aggressive than the other 2 brothers. Hugh Park was my grandfather. They all had ranches and adjoining lands, and my grandfather had his property south of David Park. Then there was another brother by the name of Joe Park, and he had a piece of ground up next to the hill.

They had other relatives, but they went on up to Oregon. I never knew them, but my mother used to talk about them. Then there was a sister; her maiden name was Park. She married and went over and lived in Angel's Camp. She married a man who followed the mines.

The 3 Park brothers settled here and developed farms and ranches. Dave Park accumulated more land and apparently was more aggressive; and my grandfather, Hugh Park, was about next in aggressiveness. He had probably 240 acres or something like that. These properties were all located north of Sheridan. That's where they got their mail, and there were saloons, stores, and the trading center there. It was a community center for that area.

Do you have any idea whether they came to the valley before the Comstock discovery or afterwards?

Oh, after. They came after my grandfather Dressler. I think they came in the late sixties. They probably homesteaded.

You said that David was perhaps a little bit more aggressive than the other 2.

He had more property, and he had a greater expanse of operation. He had cattle running out in the hills on the east side of the East Fork River. He accumulated property up at Lake Tahoe where he had a butcher shop and owned what they called Friday's Station, which now is...the basis of Sahara Tahoe Hotel

in that area up there. That's where a lot of the casinos and parking lots, banks and the businesses have their locations.

Have any stories been handed down in your family about Friday's Station when he ran it?

No, the only thing that I know is that there was a meat market there, and a store. There was still logging going on in Lake Tahoe basin. But the logging was commencing to dwindle and being closed down.

What else did David have?

I don't know how many acres he had; he had a pretty sizable piece of property on the west side, north of where my grandfather, Hugh Park, was.

He raised cattle, horses, put up hay, grain... they conducted a regular farming, ranching operation. I think they had a dairy, too. All these people had dairy cows. It's like typical of what went on.

People wonder why you had a dairy. The dairy provided a monthly income. When they took cream or milk to the creamery, they were paid every month. When you raised cattle, you were paid once or twice a year for your product. The chickens and pigs and the dairy probably wouldn't have been as big an income, but this wasn't set in stages so far apart, which provided money current for groceries and clothing and necessities of life.

My mother used to take us children down to visit our grandfather and grandmother, and Dr. Cook used to be at the household. My Aunt Evelyn was still going to school.

My Aunt Evelyn lives in Colusa, California; she's 93 years old. She's 8 years older than I am. I just stopped by to see her about 2 weeks ago on my way to Cottonwood, California, to a cattle sale.

She's very alert and talked right forward and seemed very happy. She's not as able to get around, getting like some of the rest of us; I feel that a little bit myself by now. She's vigorous. She talked about things in the past, and her memory is very sharp. Her married name is Sutton.

She raised 2 children, Park and Rebecca, and they both married and have families. She's got grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She's a very energetic person. And she had an unusual faculty: she could talk Washo Indian just as good as the Indians.

She learned it from an Indian woman that worked for them. This lady used to do the housework and pick the berries and help during the canning and putting up fruit and all that sort of thing. When she was a girl, this Indian lady took a liking to her and the old lady'd just talk Indian to her all the time. So she learned.

My grandfather Hugh Park served as a county commissioner.

Republican?

Oh, yes. By that time they were commencing to retire; they spent their last days in Oakland, California. The ranch was sold, and they moved away. After they moved away, 2 or 3 times a year probably we'd get to see the grandparents. During the summertime they'd come up and visit their children, who would be my aunts and uncle and my mother. We'd get to have them around, enjoy their company and visit with them.

We've spent very little time talking about your grandmother, your grandmother Park, whose maiden name, of course, was Cook. Can you tell me where your grandmother Park's family came from and about when they arrived in Nevada?

I don't know the dates, but my great-grandmother and her husband John Cook were polygamists. This Mrs. Cook wasn't the only wife of John Cook. They lived in Salt Lake City; he was a butcher. I don't know the details, but apparently they came to disagreement. She had these 2 little girls—my grandmother, who was my mother's mother, Rebecca Cook; and my grandaunt, my mother's aunt, Dr. Eliza Cook. They needed some shoes or clothing or something, and this Mrs. Cook—her name was Margaretta Cook—went to John Cook for help. He turned them down, so she took the little girls and came clear over into Nevada, over in Treasure City and Hamilton, a mining town out of Eureka.

They lived there for a while. Then she came to the Carson Valley where her brother-in-law lived. He was a carpenter, and he built the first Walley Springs Hotel. I think there was a Richard Cook, and Margaretta Cook came here on account of them; I think she was attracted here through them. She settled here in Sheridan. She had a little cabin. She did dressmaking and took in laundry and sewing, and did things like that to make a living for these 2 little girls.

My grandmother, Rebecca, is the one that married Hugh Park. I think the Park family must have come first and then the Cooks. But there was a man by the name of Dick Cook, who was the father of a man by the name of Richard Cook. He was a cousin to Rebecca Cook and Eliza Cook. He was a surveyor and engineer. He was from England, and he talked very good English and [was well] educated. A lot of these people who were foreigners, they were Basques or Italian or German, didn't have the English tongue. They used to go to him to write letters for them and go to him to interpret for them. They used to call him "Dictionary Cook." That all took place over on the west side; there's a Dick Cook ranch

over near Sheridan. That's where he lived. He retired, sold out here, and went to Sebastopol, California, where he died.

Let's continue with your grandmother Park. Do you have any idea of how she and your grandpa came to get married?

No, I don't know too much about that. In order for these old-timers to exist, they'd get a home and a place and marry and settle down. It looked to me like it was a 50-50 deal. The man would go out and do the hard work and take care of the outside and the rough end, and the woman would take care of the indoors. You know, in those days they had to make their own curtains; they had to do their own sewing, and they had to make their own clothes. You didn't go down here to get some garment that was made in China or Taiwan and Japan, and ship them over here in a boat load and set them up in these women's clothing stores.

I remember when my mother used to go and visit with my grandmother and my aunt they'd talk about making dresses. They took a great pride in it. They even made baby clothes when kids were first born. They had a dress [that] would hang down 3 times the length of the child's height. And they'd make baby hoods, work lace in them and do hand work. [They didn't] listen to the radio; they didn't have that. They had to be quiet. If there was an unusual noise, you went out to see what it was. If you had to go out at night, you carried a lantern with you.

Were both of your Park grandparents practicing Mormons?

I don't know how close they held to the Church of the Latter-Day Saints, but I know that my great-grandmother Cook wanted

both those girls to become Mormons and belong to the Church of the Latter-Day Saints: that's my grandmother and my aunt. They resisted; they wouldn't join the Mormon church.

My grandparents used to talk to us kids and told us always to mind our parents—first consideration—your parents; do what they say. Tell the truth, and you'll get along. I remember my grandfather talked broken English—he said, "Always tell the truth, my boy." He said, "You know, if your word is no good, you're no good."

I heard my grandfather Park talking to my mother about discussing a certain person. This impressed me because he was of the same philosophy.

My mother's aunt used to come here when we were born, and take care of my mother. She would more or less take over the household and discipline us kids. If we'd be out of order she'd say, "What would your mother think of you if she saw you do that?" and, "Your father wouldn't stand for that." We would mind her if that was the comment.

They left an impression to always respect our parents and tell the truth, do what was right, because if you don't you might get into prison. "And we don't ever want to hear of any of you being in prison, if you talk like that to us!"

So I grew up with that impression as a youngster. And there wasn't anything else to compare it to. Today there's too many things that don't have the depth of impression that people can leave on you. I see all these opportunities and kids don't come home when they should, and they tell their parents that "Johnny's father didn't make him do that, and you make me do that," and all this, that and the other. There's so much good in the world and so much of this other foolishness available that you don't know which is the best... you take the easiest. Humanity is prone

to take the easiest. Sometimes the easiest isn't the best.

Can you tell me a few things about Joe Park.

I never was too well acquainted with Joe Park; that was my mother's uncle. There was a large family of them; they lived up against a hill just west of my grandfather Hugh Park's place. They had a few milk cows, and they're the ones that cut wood. One of the oldest ones, I think, was William Park; he got to be sheriff.

Was he another Republican?

Oh, yes. He learned to be a blacksmith in the blacksmith shop that belonged to my grandfather. Then he went down to Centerville and he bought the John Rieman shop, him and his brother Clarence. From there they sold out and went to Minden.

The Joe Park family was a large family. As the kids got old enough they worked. There was Bill Park; he got to be sheriff. Then there was Clarence; he was a horseshoer and a blacksmith and a rancher. Then there was Arthur; he used to work on threshing machines and run steam engines. I think he ended up by being a carpenter. One of them was named Hugh; he went off to college and was educated. I think he wanted to be an engineer. He got pneumonia and died early as a young man. Then there was Russell. He used to work for my grandfather and work on ranches. He died early. There was Virgil Park. He was a plumber. There was Harold Park; he worked in a creamery and had a lot to do with the firefighting in Minden. There was one girl; her name was May Kyle. She married a man by the name of Kyle, and he was a grist man. They all went into different lines of endeavor. Joe Park didn't seem to take to building up a big enterprise. He raised a nice family, and

they all grew up to be honorable, industrious and constructive people. They made a good contribution to the community. Most of them spent their lives right in the area.

Clarence took up some land. He was the only one that seemed to take up much land. He had a little ranch, owned some cattle. But they didn't get extensively into any business. They had a flour mill up there [behind Genoa]. My grandfather and my father were interested. My grandfather was interested because of his daughter. Her husband was a miller. They lived there, and they were running the mill. There was a necessity for a flour mill here.

Henry Beck was my uncle. He was married to my Aunt Clara, my father's sister. The mill was closed down, I think, and Henry Beck came over to Minden to run the Minden mill.

My dad used to go down there; it was above where my uncle used to live. My uncle used to own the place that Graham Hollister owns today, and the mill was up on the creek above his ranch. They ran it with water power. I think my grandparents on both sides were forward-thinking people. They took an interest in politics as far as they could go. I know my grandfather was a Republican; that indicates that he was interested in politics. And my father and my uncles and my aunts were brought up to be good citizens.

They were among some of the leading and constructive folks that helped develop and push this country along. They did their share of promoting the area in which they lived.

* * * * *

My father was born here in a little house just north of where I live right now on March 9, 1871. His full name was William Frederick Dressler. He always used to sign his name W.

F. Dressler; that was his signature. He went by the name Bill Dressler.

My mother's maiden name was Margaretta Ann Park, and she signed her name Margaretta A. Dressler. She was born December 4, 1873; she was 2 years younger than my father. She was born in a little house that has since been burned up, but she was born right down north of Sheridan on the Hugh Park ranch.

When he [my father] was a young man he was more of a slender man, but he was rugged. He had above the average strength of an individual. He was about 5 foot 11½, about the same height I am. He had blue eyes and dark hair. He weighed probably up to 240 pounds when he got older.

He was a fellow that enjoyed building. He enjoyed associating with the people that had property and would have enterprises. He became very interested in livestock associations. He was one of the first presidents of the Nevada Livestock Production Credit Association. He helped with the Federal Land Bank. These things all took place and my dad took a great interest, which reflected a great benefit on his neighbors and friends to reconstruct the country and bring back and maintain the economic strength that agriculture needed after the Depression. He spent lots of time going to meetings for the benefit of his fellow man and his industry.

My mother grew up down here in Mottsville, and my father and her went to the same grammar school. She became a schoolteacher, and she taught school at Hobart up at Lake Tahoe; that's a little community that existed during the logging days in Lake Tahoe. I remember her telling me when she wanted to be a schoolteacher she wasn't highly educated. She got books and studied, and went and took the teacher's examination by studying by herself. In order to take this teacher's examination, she had

to walk from Silver City down the canyon to Dayton to meet with the man who was head of the Department of Education. She walked down there and took the teacher's examination and passed. She didn't teach too many years, but she was a schoolteacher.

I think that helped me very materially because she never sent me to school until I was 8 years old.

What year did your mother and father get married?

Must have been 1897 because I was born in 1898.

And your mother had been teaching school for probably 6 or 7 years?

No, I don't think she taught school that long. She probably had that position, I wouldn't say more than 3 or 4 years, if that long.

My mother had lots of relatives in Salt Lake. Her people have polygamous origin. She used to visit people back there. At one time she worked in a millinery store, where they made women's hats in Salt Lake.

My mother was probably between 5 foot, 2, and 5 foot, 4. She was not a large woman, but she was very strong. She'd do anything with vigor and determination.

She used to like to read history. She would use it for a reference, and to talk about her relatives and some of the hardships and privation that prevailed with them during their getting their start. In order for us to get started, why, we'd have to start at the beginning.

I was born in this house, 3 August 1898. Dr. Eliza Cook...my mother's aunt...was the attending physician. There were 7 of us born

in the family, and they were all born in this house. There was myself; my full name is Frederick Hugh, named after my father's father and my mother's father—Hugh Park and Frederick Dressler. There was Myron Park Dressler; that was my brother next to me. He was named after a friend of my father's by the name of Myron Chambers; Park comes from my mother's maiden name. Lucile, her maiden name was just plain Lucile Dressler. Then there was another brother; his name was Erwin Bud Dressler. The next one was Carroll William Dressler, apparently the middle name from my father. The next one was Milton Nevada Dressler, and then the youngest one was Margaretta Dressler, my sister.

Some of my earliest recollections as a child growing up go back to my memory of being in the house and being around my mother and father. My mother was very careful to see that we didn't leave the house and weren't out beyond her knowledge of where we were. We had to report. If I went with my father, I had to go in the house and tell my mother I was going with my father. If I went beyond the house somewhere to play out in the yard, I always had to tell her where I was going. As children we never at any time could go beyond the hearing of my mother's voice. She had a very shrill voice and if she would call and we couldn't hear her we'd get a spanking. Her great fear was that we might fall in the river, which was a stream some times of the year.

As I grew up, my father took me with him on his horse behind his saddle. If the horse had to jump a ditch, or he had to chase a cow or do something like that, he kept me secure behind him. As I grew older and learned how to balance myself, I'd hang onto the waist of his overalls or hold of his suspenders. Then I graduated to a gentle mare that they had here.

How old were you when you got your first horse?

I was about 6. From there I rode horseback with my father. I remember him buying me a little shovel, so that I could help him irrigate. As time went on, if he wanted the cattle moved he'd direct me to go and head one off or do certain things. That was my beginning in riding horseback and handling cattle.

There was a wash just south of where their [my grandparents] house was, and we used to go and play in the hollow in sand when we were kids. My mother'd drive us down there; she'd visit with her folks and take us in a one-horse buggy: 2 of us on the seat, and one sat down on the bottom under the feet with your head back against the dashboard. But I remember my grandmother...we used to like her apple pie and gooseberry pie. I'll never forget the taste of those things. My Aunt Evelyn and our grandpa had a rabbit hutch. We'd go down there, and Grandfather'd kill some rabbits, and they'd cook them and we'd have rabbit for dinner.

Did your family keep rabbits here?

No, they didn't have rabbits. I remember that. My grandfather gave me a saddle horse, a bald-faced bay horse called Ned, before he sold the ranch. I used to use him riding; I could ride him bareback or go trapping. We used to trap when I was a kid going to school...catch skunks, mink, muskrat, coyotes. [laughter]

Would you sell the pelts? Where would you sell them?

Well, there used to be outfits that would advertise. You'd ship them to them and they'd

grade them, and then they'd send you some money. That's how we got paid for trapping.

Where was the best place to trap around here?

It depended on the time of year. We'd catch muskrats along the river down in the swamps, tule patches. You can go around and you can tell where they are. They leave tracks where they run down into the stream.

Did you use store-bought traps, or did you make your own?

Oh no, we used store-bought, steel traps—traps called Victor, Newhouse, O'Neida Jump. Three different kinds of steel traps.

I wasn't sent to school until I was 8 years old. I must have been about 5 when my mother started teaching me how to count, add, multiply—not a great deal of multiplication, but addition—spelling, and memorizing words to where I was probably suitable for the second grade.

It was just circumstance that it was a distance over to the school, and they had some concern about how I would get there. It was easier to teach me in the beginning. When I got old enough to ride they put me on a horse and sent me to school.

My mother took me to school for about the first week in the buggy. I remember the first day in school; I was afraid and bashful, and I didn't want to stay there. I cried and made quite a commotion. Some of the kid's finally consoled me, and I stayed there. Some of the older girls kind of took me under their wing. The oldest one was Kate Heidtman, and there was Flora Smith. They were neighbor girls that went to school there. Finally it prevailed on me, and from then on I went to school. They had an old white mare that I used

to ride. It's about 2½ miles to the Fairview School.

The first year I went to school there were 9 grades. There was 2 of us in the first grade—Willy Tucky and I. We were the primary. Then there was Settelmeiers, Heidtmans, Wiermans, Andersons, Manfrenas, my cousin Dressler. There must have been around 18 or 20 at that time.

While you were still of elementary school age did you play with any Washo Indian kids?

Yes. They came here and worked right alongside their parents for my father. They might herd sheep a little bit, or they'd help their fathers do some irrigating or various things. Their folks wanted them to learn how to make a living their way.

What kind of games did you and the Washo kids play together?

Oh, we used to play hide and seek, marbles, annie over. You know what annie over is? You throw the ball over a roof and holler, "annie over!" the minute you throw it. The people on the other side can't see you, but they get ready to catch it. If it hits the ground, they got to throw it back and give you the signal. If you catch it, then you got to chase around and touch them. If you can touch them before they get away, they've got to throw the ball again.

Did the Washo kids speak English.

Yes. They learned to talk English.

Were you learning to speak Washo at that early age?

We used to speak broken Indian to them. Instead of us learning the Indian, they were learning English from us. It kind of leaned that way.

How long did you go to Fairview?

I went 8 years, graduated out of the eighth grade, and then went for 4 years and graduated from the Douglas County High School. Then [I was] headed for the Davis College of Agriculture at Davis, California, and I got sick on the way and had to go to the hospital. I went down there, but I wasn't feeling just right and felt kind of discouraged, so my father thought it was better that I would come home until I would recover and feel better. I had chronic appendicitis, so I lingered along with that till February of the following year. So I never did go any further in school. As a matter of fact, I wasn't too eager to go in the first place; I was just halfhearted, because I'd already established myself pretty firm in the operation of the ranch. That was the end of my scholastic career.

My first teacher was Jeannie Mills. Another one was Miss Schultz; she afterwards became Mrs. Rabe and raised a family here in Carson Valley. I remember she was pretty definite, and all of these teachers needed to have strict discipline.

Did any teacher make a greater impact on you than any of the others?

There was a man by the name of Theodore Hook. He was a little short fellow, and he was the principal and coach and the head of the school. Then there were 2 women teachers, one of them was a lady by the name of Cora Kreuger. Then there was a lady by the name

of Wilhelmina Richards. Then there was a third one who was a native-born girl here in Carson Valley. Her name was Matilda Jepsen. When I went to high school, I remember her very distinctly teaching algebra. She helped me immensely with that. She was a very young teacher, probably taught high school younger than most girls do that teach at that level. She taught here in the schools for years and years; her impact on the lives of many of our Carson Valley natives is deeply seated. She is still alive.

Did she teach other subjects?

She taught history. Cora Kreuger was teaching German...I studied German when I went to high school...and Cora Kreuger taught geometry.

The 2 teachers that left the greatest impact on me in a philosophical way was Mr. Theodore Hook. He probably taught here about 7 years; he was the principal throughout my 4 years. The other was Miss Kreuger.

What did she teach you? What kind of an effect did she have?

The thing that I remember most was to get my lessons, to be thorough, and to have a reason for going to school. She even would hold spelling classes in high school. If we didn't get the words right, we'd have to write them 500 times till we did get them right. She'd take the time to stay with you after school if you weren't getting your lessons or didn't understand them. That impressed on me that when you do something, do it right and be ready to stay there and finish the job. If you start something, finish it, and be correct and courteous. She demanded

courtesy from all the kids. She was a very personable person.

You were going to high school during the First World War. Was there any sentiment against learning or speaking German here in the valley?

Yes. Before the world war quit, I think a feeling developed. They talked about burning the German books. It was just talk. Of course, this was a German community. A lot of people in here were right straight from Germany. It was hard thrust on a lot of them because their sons had to go back and fight against their relatives in Germany.

How did your family feel about it?

We weren't as personally affected as some of these families. We had to stand by the government; we had to be against Germany because Germany was our enemy.

Did you feel comfortable with that?

We made the best of it. We didn't talk about these things.

I know that your grandparents spoke German. What about your father?

He didn't speak very good German. He could speak and understand it, but he was a native-born American. It wasn't too serious a matter. There were people that changed their names. ..not in this community...but it did happen in parts of the country.

Did the high school continue to offer German as a course?

There was a feeling of not wanting to teach it, but I don't think they ever did stop.

What year did you graduate?

I graduated in 1918. I started high school in 1914.

Were there any social events during the years that you were in high school that are worth recounting now?

Yes, we had our high school dances and parties. We always had a dance after a basketball game, and we had scheduled games throughout the basketball season. When I went to high school, we didn't have enough boys to have a football team, so basketball was our main athletic event. There were no buses. We'd take our car and families who had cars would take the cars and the group. They'd take 2 or 3 cars and gather up the teams and some rooters and the coach and go to Yerington, Reno, or Carson. We made one trip overnight to Tonopah and played 2 nights in a row. [We] stayed at the Mizpah Hotel in its heyday. That was the end of the Southern Pacific Railroad at that time.

There was a boys' team and a girls' team, and both teams won. They took us down Belmont mine, way down 2,000 feet. Took us through some stopes where they'd dump the ore down through a sloping tunnel to the next door and into bins, and load it into cars, and move it through the tunnel and up the shaft. That was quite an experience.

Were you on any other athletic teams other than the basketball team?

We had a track team. When I entered, we went to Reno to run in the footracing and some other boys were in the pole vaulting. I

don't remember all the events, but I remember I come out way in the tail end. My hip went bad on me. I just got about halfway around, and I ducked into the athletic quarters. That ended my footracing.

Were you doing anything similar to rodeo at that time? Were you involved in any kind of ranch sports?

Well, the way you talk about rodeo and high school rodeo, there was no such thing as an organization and a promotion like they have today. They'd have a rodeo...a kind of a country affair...on a Sunday. People that had a horse that couldn't be ridden would bring them to the center, and we'd take them out in an open area surrounded by automobiles, and get some fellows around there to herd them. They'd snub them up, and the fellow that was going to ride would get on; then they'd give you the halter rope and away you go. Sometimes they'd get out and run off; most of the time they'd stay within an arena. They'd pick you up, bring you back in after the ride was over; it was a kind of a makeshift deal. They'd give cash award. I never did get any top money; I got about second money.

How young were you when you started to do that kind of thing?

I was in the latter years in high school, but it had nothing to do with high school. It was just an open country affair.

Where were the dances held, and how did all the people get to the dances and home again once the dance was over?

They had a dance hall in Gardnerville called the Valhalla Hall, and there was the

CVIC Hall in Minden; that was there when we were younger. I took dancing les[sons]. Before we had a gymnasium at the high school, we played basketball in the Valhalla Hall, and we had our dances there. After we moved into the new high school, we had our own gym. Before that we played basketball in the CVIC Hall, and in the Armory Hall in Carson if we played there. We played in a dance hall up in Virginia City. The schools didn't have gymnasiums when I went to school. In Yerington, you play in a public dance hall.

How did you get the baskets up? They must have been different from the kind of baskets we are familiar with today.

No, they were just rough-board frames. They were the same dimensions and specifications, as far as the goals, and the netting on the goal was just the same as it is today. We had to take them down and put them up when we held our game in the public dance hall.

I bet the dimensions of the court changed, depending on the size of the dance hall, didn't they?

Very definitely because the court would then be a prescribed dimension, so we just had to fit ourselves together in a dance hall with the people around the wall.

Tell me about the dances. How did people get to them and home again?

Some of them would come with their horses and buggies. Most of the time that I went to dances automobiles had started to become in use in this valley. Most of the families did have automobiles, so that the

family car would come to use and be served for the transportation for boys and girls that were attending an athletic event or going to dances.

We used to have a live band, and one of the men that we used to have was Tony Pacetti. We used to get Tony to come out from Reno. He played the accordion. It'd be about a 3 and 4 piece. They had a piano and a trombone, trumpet and sometimes a violin...I mean music pieces like that. They played waltzes, schottische, 2-step, rye waltz—the old-fashioned dances.

There was a lady come in here to teach dancing, and my mother had me go to it. One of the neighbor's boys and I attended it. We had a 1913 Hupmobile, and I used to pick Richard Traun up and we'd drive down to Minden. They taught this dancing at the CVIC Hall—Carson Valley Improvement Club. It still stands. It's used for speaking, dances, any social affairs.

What about the Valhalla Hall?

Public gatherings. The Valhalla Hall is no more. It was just south of a place called Magoo's here in town, a restaurant, across the street from the Masonic Hall.

I started high school in the fall of 1914. My mother was dead set on all of us kids going to high school. I happened to be the oldest, so I was the first one to go to high school and be initiated into the process.

Did you want to go?

It didn't make any difference to me. It seemed like it was the thing to do. My mother and my father saw to it that I did go to school. They provided one of the saddle horses that I'd been using here on the ranch. So I get myself ready, and my mother fixes the lunch

and I proceed to high school; I went about 2 weeks horseback. We had to be dressed up, and wearing a suit of clothes riding horseback didn't suit my fancy too good. I told my mother, so she and my dad got a horse and buggy and I drove to high school the rest of that year.

The following year, I started with a horse and buggy again, then I ended up buying a motorcycle. I'd been wanting a motorcycle for a long time, and Dad more or less intimated that if I got my lessons in good shape he'd get me one. When it come time to produce the motorcycle, I think he—probably wisely—had second thoughts about it. He proceeded to talk me out of it, but he didn't accomplish that. I finally prevailed, and I got a secondhand motorcycle.

What kind did you get?

An Indian motorcycle. It wasn't one of the biggest ones, but I went to high school the rest of that year on that motorcycle. The next year my brother and sister started, so he bought us a 2-seated Model T Ford car. We wore that one out, and then they bought another one. And then we went 2 years with the Ford. I finished my last 2 years going to school in this Ford. The third year of my brother's and sister's term in high school, they bought a small model Oldsmobile, and they finished going to high school in that.

As long as you were going by horse-drawn conveyance or on the back of a horse, what did you do with the horse when you arrived at high school?

There was a man by the name of Jepsen, who was the father of Matilda Jepsen. He had a stable right near the high school building. I'd just drive in the barn, unhitch the horse,

and put it in the stable, and it'd be fed hay and watered during the day. As soon as school had closed and we were let out to go home, I'd hitch up the horse and take off.

Did he stable for most of the kids who brought their horses to school?

Yes, he stabled horses for several kids. He stabled a horse for Springmeyers and for the Heises. There were quite a few of the kids that walked, and a lot of them lived in town. My wife stayed in town. She lived way up in the Alpine County, and it wouldn't have been practical for her to drive back and forth, so she lived with her brother and his wife while she went to high school. Numerous other kids would do that, and their folks'd come and get them on the weekends.

What did you do during your summer vacations while you were in high school?

I didn't have spare time on my own. My dad saw to it that if there was any time to spare, he had a place for me and dictated what I do. That's probably why I got geared into this ranch business like I have, because my dad saw to it that there was no spare time to be thrown away; it'd be all useful. Of course, I was agreeable. I liked to work, and I liked to be with him. I liked to see the ranch go, and liked to mingle with the people that were working for us. They were people from foreign lands; they were the native Indians at that time, and many times they were young people raised here in the valley—neighbors and town boys. The agriculture at that time offered lots of jobs. The wages weren't a lot, but that was the only kind of work.

Of course, you did find time to do some hunting and trapping and fishing and so forth.

Yes, I hunted and trapped during school days. I'd get up early in the morning and ride out horseback.

Where did you have traps strung?

Up and down the creek and out here in the hills. During my high school, I didn't trap. All my trapping was during grammar school. I might've had a few traps out for muskrats during high school, but by the time I'd get up and get started away from here.. .having had breakfast and hitch up the team...it'd be 7:00.

Can you tell me what you did with the pelts of the animals you trapped?

We used to send them away. There were people that would send out advertisements and addresses and otter prices, and we'd write to them... Kansas City, St. Louis and places like that. You'd prepare your skins—dry them and prepare them and wrap them up—and mail them to these people, and they'd grade them and send you what they told you they were worth. We didn't get too much. [laughter]

Was that your only source of cash?

No. My father always paid me when I worked. I always had a few dollars in my pocket, but I had to earn it. There were times after I grew up, and I needed some money. My father would see to it that I had money to travel on, or money to take with me if I went on a basketball trip or had to have money. But most of the time, that money was the money I earned during vacation or whatever. Some of the things that probably affected the directions I took after leaving high school were inspired while I was in high school.

Professor Theodore Hook, who was my principal in high school, came from Whiting, Iowa, where they raise corn and hogs and cattle. He inspired the kids to get into agriculture, which was a good thing because most of these boys going to school here at that time were off the ranches and farms, so it fit right in.

In studying agriculture and cattle, I was inspired with Herefords. My father was always a shorthorn enthusiast. In 1915 he bought a small herd of Herefords down at the Panama Pacific International Exposition. I remember the name of the herd sire that he got, Divide Cumberland, and his registration number was 417,423.

You remember that after all these years? He must have been a pretty important animal.

He was. We built that herd from about 3 cows and the bull to about 30 head. I built it up coincidental with a start of Herefords that my dad bought for me in 1919. He bought me 20 heifers and a bull from a man by the name of W. N. Collier at Fulton, Missouri. We went back there and picked them out on his ranch, and my dad loaded me and the cattle on a freight train. I rode the caboose out here to start my purebred herd of Hereford cattle which I still maintain.

What was it that Hook told you about Herefords that convinced you that that was the way to go?

It wasn't that he inspired me to any breed. After I had some experience, I liked the color of them and I liked what I read about them. I just picked them out as I wanted them. They had one color [combination]—red and white. Shorthorns have red, and red and white, and roan. I liked the Hereford conformation, too. I enjoyed my high school years, and it

was there that the courtship started between myself and my wife. As kids in the country, she knew who I was and I knew who she was, but that was that. After we started high school, we became better acquainted; she was in my class into her third year in high school. We just developed a friendship and then a courtship. She was on the girls' basketball team, and I was on the boys' team. We went to dances together and after we started we never quit. [We've] been together going on 64 years since marriage. We were both 22 years old.

I understand that in 1906 you were in San Francisco at the time of the great earthquake and fire. Can you tell me what you remember about your experiences during the earthquake?

I happened to be down there to try to correct and recover hearing. I had a failing in one ear. My folks didn't discover it until one day my mother was whispering in my ear, and I had to turn my head. That made her suspicious. I do remember one time having a wheat straw poked in my ear. It hurt inside, but I didn't pay any attention. It could've been that that punctured the eardrum. She went down with me to a doctor by the name of Dr. Barkan for treatments to try to recover the hearing in my right ear.

While my mother and I were down there, this great San Francisco fire and earthquake took place. My mother was staying with me in the Golden West Hotel in San Francisco. I don't know how long we had been there, but this happened on 6 April 1906 about 6:00 in the morning. She shook me and woke me up; she said, "Earthquake! Earthquake!"

When we went to leave the room, the door was jammed; she could hardly open the door. The lights were out. Down in the office the clerk was at his desk with a candle. We went up into Union Square, which is about

2½ blocks up Powell Street across from the St. Francis Hotel. While we were there, it quivered a time or 2, and there was lots of confusion. People were running in every direction. ..some of them coming out of buildings with their nightclothes on. People [were] hollering and screaming, "Look out for live wires"—the electric lines that ran the trolley cars were down in the street.

She stayed there a little while, and took me back to the hotel. She must have meditated; she didn't say much. She went up to the room and packed up what she could carry. She treasured a little set of expensive doll dishes that she had bought for my sister Lucille. She wrapped them up carefully and put string around them so the box would hold together. We went to the end of Powell onto Market going north on Market. We got out past the city hall, it shook again, and the stones and stuff started to fall off the building. The only vehicle that you could see were some automobiles and drays.

We were on foot. A man came along with a horse and buggy and he offered my mother and I a ride. He asked her where she wanted to go, and she told him out to Twenty-third and Folsom street, where she had a friend who had a little corner grocery. So he took us out there. We stayed there 2 nights.

In the meantime, my father heard about this earthquake and fire, and he became frantic. He got a hold of his folks in Hayward and they hadn't heard from us, so he drove his buckboard and team to Carson City and got on the train to San Francisco. He tried to go across on a ferry boat, but they weren't permitting anybody to enter San Francisco. He hired a gasoline launch over on the Oakland side and landed on North Beach in San Francisco. He walked across the hills and came to this Twenty-third and Folsom place, and asked these folks if they'd seen us.

And Mrs. Thurston, a friend of my mother's, said we'd left about an hour ahead and gone out in the hills. So he set foot to find us. He wandered out there among thousands of people out in the hills.

Were they trying to avoid the fire?

Yes, and waiting till they could move out the next day. They were taking people out as fast as they could.

So he wandered around, and lo and behold he run into my mother. It was dark except the moon was up, and it shown red from the smoke. I remember my mother saying, "Oh, Willy!" And there was my father.

We stayed there the rest of the night. When it became daylight we wandered to the ferry building through the smoking ruins. I remember seeing horses lying dead in the street hooked to the fire engine. We had to leap across a big crevice in the street—it cracked. We took a ferry to Oakland and stayed with my dad's folks a day, and then came home.

Was your hearing ever fixed?

No, I've been deaf all my life. My right ear is deaf. Having only one ear, if you hear a sudden noise it's hard for you to pick the direction from which it came. If you hear a steady noise, you can turn around and find it. If you're being called, sometimes you have to call back to answer and tell them to call again. After the fire, looting started to take place. The mayor, in order to stop this looting, turned the city over to martial law under General Funston, a Spanish-American War general. The soldiers were instructed to shoot to kill. There was no more looting.

Did you and your mother feel that you were in any danger?

I never had any concern. No doubt she was very worried, because she didn't want to stay. She was concerned because they were dynamiting buildings to the edge of Van Ness Avenue.

Did you and your mother lose any personal property?

She lost a trunk full of clothes: my clothes and her dresses. All we took was what we could carry—just a set of doll dishes, our overcoat and her purse. When she left the hotel, she went to the hotel office, to the clerk, and got her money...her gold coins that she had left in the hotel safe. Paper money was practically nonexistent in those days.

While you were waiting in the hills after your father found you where did you sleep?

We just stood around there. It was chilly.

You had no shelter of any kind?

No shelter.

Was there any source of water or food nearby?

No. We didn't get anything to drink or eat until we got across the bay. Having the city put under martial law, they had to provide immediate relief. People were living out there in the parks. Golden Gate Park was filled with people in tents. They had to bring groceries, provide toilet facilities and haul water.

* * * * *

My father used to wear a felt hat with 4 corners—it had 4 dents in it—flat brim. It had a regular color like the color that I wear now. He wore a jumper and a pair of overalls. He

used to work on the ranch; he'd do anything there was to be done. He was a vigorous individual. He was a strong man and could ride a bucking horse. He could pitch hay. I remember when I was a little boy, I would sit on a fence and he'd milk a string of cows, a string of 30 cows. He'd milk one string of cows and do the irrigating for the ranch and supervise the haying and all during that time. From there he went on into the sheep business. He got a hold of some raw land and Mud Lake, and he built the dam and improved the land.

He'd have Indians working for him. The Indians did most of the brush grubbing in the 600 acres that my father developed. He put alfalfa in, took the brush off, provided hay and forage for sheep and cattle, steers, beef cattle, lambs and dairy cows.

He had wells drilled. He liked to have to do with water resources. He'd take raw land and remove the sagebrush, build canals to convey water to it and develop an enterprise to raise livestock. That inspired getting a hold of more range; he used to own a big piece of range out in the Pine Nut Mountains.

In order to facilitate and have a better disposal for the dairy products, he was inspired to take an interest in a creamery. He came into the agricultural industry and the setup in this valley after it had been started and inspired. People came here and saw the resources. Among them at that time was my father to follow my grandfather, who came and started the whole thing.

My father was a character. The only time that he was in his great glory was to have what he had with the idea of acquiring what was next to him. Apparently he accomplished quite a bit toward that end.

He was instrumental in helping build a flour mill. He was the president of it. He was president of the creamery in this community,

and he was president of the bank. A bunch of farmers got together and started a bank. There was already a bank in this community, but some of these people saw the necessity of having another bank. There was a bank here started by a man by the name of Jensen, who was a general merchant, called the Douglas County Bank. So there were 2 banks here. Besides, he served in the legislature. I think, up until the present day, he's the only individual that served as long a period of time in our state legislature as he did—28 years.

Your father ran for the state legislature in 1917 or 1918. Can you remember why he decided to run for office to begin with?

I was starting on my third year in high school. I used to hear people talk about various things, and I knew my father and both my grandparents were Republican, so I naturally leaned toward Republican because of my predecessors.

I think my father was inspired to run for the state legislature because of his associates and the people that encouraged him. They wanted somebody that would stand up for a certain principle. My father had definite ideas about government and private enterprise and some of those things, and I think he was inspired by his neighbors and friends to run. After he was elected, he was only opposed one time. The rest of the time he was unopposed in any election for the job to serve.

I think that some of the main things that inspired him was the matter of taxation. Taxes were commencing to be raised. That was the reason that he stood for proper taxation. He spent lots of time serving in the legislature. While he was there it threw an extra burden on my mother taking care of things at the ranch.

Did much of the burden of running a ranch fall on you?

As I grew older and grew into it, it did. We were all getting old enough to go to school, and some of them to the university. My brother wanted to be a mechanic. My mother was a great person to stay with the family and guide us, and help us and be close to us. As the burdens of the ranch became heavier on her, she wasn't able to withstand all this, so they bought a home in Oakland and my dad would go back and forth. I had one brother and my sister went to University of California, another brother went to Davis, and my younger sister went to University of California. My folks thought that my mother would be close to the children.

Throughout my father's and mother's life, my father took a very active part and was scattering himself around to conduct his operation as it grew bigger and to properly maintain it. It took a great deal of management. I came along as a young man, and I took my place in the affairs so my mother could stay with the rest of the kids.

What year was that when your mom moved to Oakland?

About 1921. I was the only one to stay on the ranch. My one brother got married, and he lived in town. He started in the oil business. The other children were all in school down below.

It's an old German tradition that the eldest son is the one who takes over the affairs of the family. Was there ever any discussion of that in your family?

It was just a matter of natural circumstances. My mother and father didn't

hold any tradition of that sort. I just happened to be the one that fit on the best and took an interest and saw fit to stay here and help my parents do what was necessary. My wife came along; she came from the background of ranch people and farm people. She was taken out of school before she graduated by her parents to come home and take care of the household and facilitate the ranching operation of her side, her folks, her mother and her father and the household that they had to maintain. She fit into the picture, and between what I had to do and what she was willing to do enabled me to do what I've accomplished in my life.

Your father was a member of what has been characterized since then as the Bull Bloc in the state legislature. Did he ever talk to you about that identification or how he may have felt about it?

No, he wasn't a fellow that'd explain a lot to us kids. The Bull Bloc was a group of senators in the state legislature—a bipartisan group—that saw fit to hold down taxation. They call them the Bull Bloc because most of them were ranch owners and big operations in Elko County, and one of them was an attorney.

Another thing that placed this in perspective was a depression that took place in 1923, and another depression that was very materially damaging and caused lots of people in the livestock business to go broke in 1929, 1930. So taxation and government expense was kept to a minimum. Of course, my dad was always a believer in schools.

You learned to operate this ranch primarily by doing various tasks that are required of the successful operation of one. There wasn't any formal education involved there, was there?

My life was probably shaped from a child, by following my father around and working with him and being close to him. He got to be president of the bank, president of the creamery, president of the flour mill, and these operations and these enterprises that Carson Valley developed through the effort and energy and ingenuity of the local ranchers. It seemed like they were progressive; they saw fit to have these things. My father was one of those kind of fellows that liked to develop and help do it, and I tagged along with him quite a bit and got the general direction that he was going by observation.

I learned way early that I didn't ask my dad why to do it; I did it. He said, "You do it, and then you'll know why I told you to do it." That was the impetus on which I would take off when I was told what to do. If he was going to buy another piece of property, he'd talk about it and talk about the expansive aspect of what he was doing. That encouraged me to want to be part of it.

I learned how to ride by riding; I learned how to drive a mowing machine by driving it; I learned how to clean out the pigsty by cleaning it out; I learned how to milk by milking a cow. I could do and learn anything that there is to do pertaining to the ranching and livestock in this part of the country. I've done it, and I can do it.

It was no mystery to me when he put me out with the hired men. I was put out to work right alongside of the hired men... told to respect them. If there were older men than I was, I always had to call them "Mister."

A lot of these old fellows were real fine people. Many of them were men that had fallen by the way, alcoholic or such life, but they were good respectable people. Many times they took interest in me. I had a great deal of admiration for the people that I grew up with as a boy, whether they might be an

old Indian; they might be an old Frenchman, talk broken; or an old Chinese cook. I always was taught to have a deep admiration for those people. It was on that premise that I based my life and what I've done in the past has been formed.

The things that formed me and probably shaped my life is the experiences that I've had. I'll feel comfortable. I feel comfortable when I asked President Reagan to sign a picture with a pen. I've got a pen that he used to autograph a picture, and a picture.

Both my grandparents were strictly honorable people, and they believed in raising their children honorable. I'll give you an instance: one time my dad took us along in a spring wagon over to the head of the Edna ditch. He tied the team up and left us there by the wagon while he went up to regulate the headgate of this ditch. We were playing around there, and my brother picked up an old Dixie Queen tobacco can. It was kind of a fancy can...had the tobacco in it and lined with lead foil and with a slit-top lid on it, probably hold about 2 quarts volume. It was laying around out there in the stack yard. My brother picked it up, and he put it in the spring wagon. When my father came back, he got in the wagon and saw this can. He said, "Where did you get that? Did somebody give it to you?"

And my brother said, "No. We picked it up."

He said, "That don't belong to you. You take that and put it right back where you got it."

That's a sample of what kind of teaching my father would give us kids. If we didn't mind our mother, we got a whipping. If my dad would be gone and if we were disobedient and she decided we needed a whipping—she couldn't do it—she'd tell us, "Well, you'll get a whipping when your dad gets home." That wasn't a threat; it was a

promise. If it took a week before he got home, we could think about that coming whipping that we were going to get at the end of the week. And we got it. That was the way they'd discipline.

My father would tell us that when my mother told us to do something, do it, because if we didn't *he'd* give us a whipping. That's typical of the old families in this valley.

When they got old enough to go to school, they went to school to mind the teacher. If the teacher didn't suit the kids, that was just the kids' hard luck. They weren't sent to school to judge the teachers, or to decide and bring home their likes and dislikes of the teacher. Their folks might ask them, "How do you like the teacher?" You might comment that you didn't like her or something like that, but that was not a criterion on whether the folks would like the teacher.

In those days the kids were under the jurisdiction or discipline of the parents right close. They went to school to listen to the teacher. And I remember nobody took their school problems home to their parents from the school I went to up here in Fairview. We settled our disputes at the schoolhouse with the teacher. If she wasn't able to handle it, she took the matter to our parents, which in most instances would end up in somebody getting reprimanded by their parents and maybe get a spanking or a whipping.

Can you remember who your schoolteacher was at that time?

Jeannie Mills.

If the teacher didn't conduct herself properly and the kids weren't getting along in school, the parents would find it out. Among those parents was the Board of Trustees: 3 people of the community of each school district. The schoolteachers lived and boarded

most times at one or other of these ranchers' homes. Many of them boarded here. My mother was a trustee, and we had a horse and buggy that we'd hitch up every morning and go to school. Among the passengers was the schoolteacher.

Did your dad have any plans for you or for the other children of the family in later life?

I think he hoped that we would all be ranchers, but he didn't have any definite idea. He provided all the natural resources. He provided lots of land; he provided various things that if any of them wanted to take hold, they could have. I never went further than high school, and so I took hold.

My brother next to me [Myron], one of the things that impeded him was he was afflicted with asthma and hay fever. On that account, he had to go somewhere else. He couldn't possibly work in the hay, and in order to run one of these ranches you got to be in the hay. There are many people afflicted to a degree, but it didn't bother me as much.

Then another brother came along, and he got it so he couldn't stay. The one brother that could have stayed [Carroll] went 4 years to University of California and 2 years to the Harvard School of Business Administration, and got himself a job with the Standard Oil Company. He was taken into the Second World War as a second lieutenant and discharged as a lieutenant colonel. He came back, picked up his job, came up to Lake Tahoe and had dinner with some folks, and went back to his home in San Francisco, got a heart attack and died at 40 years old.

The one that got the hay fever was Milton.

Then I had a brother by the name of Erwin; he passed away with scarlet fever and measles while he was in grammar school about 1916, 1917.

I had a sister by the name of Lucile, and she married Norman Brown. After they were married, he went to work in a store for a while and he was a butcher. He worked for his uncle. Finally, my dad put him on a little ranch in Smith Valley. From there he put him in charge of the big ranch that he had in Smith Valley.

Tell me something about your mother's approach to raising a family....

There ended up [to be] 7 of us. She'd put up 7 lunches in the morning. She used to supervise the kitchen when I was a kid, and then there was a great tendency to have steak in the morning.

Lots of the time we had steak in the morning because they wanted to preserve that ham and bacon that they could take to the sheepherders and the cowboys.

Did your mom keep a garden?

Yes, my mother had a big garden. She used to supervise and buy the seeds. We used to like sweet corn. She used to order from the Burpee Seed Company—Golden Bantam sweet corn. Then we'd have these cantaloupe and watermelon. Basically we had berries—raspberries, currants; white, black and red currants. My mother didn't have a strawberry patch. The strawberry patch became pretty prominent after my wife come into the outfit. They had rhubarb; they'd use that for pies. They had gooseberries, and my mother used to get the Indian women to pick those berries.

My mother used to make lots of currant jelly. That was followed up by my wife; she made lots of currant jelly, too. They used to dry some apples, but most of the dried fruit that was used on the ranch was bought. They had processes and places where they'd do it;

it was protected and put out on a flat surface with trays and then sacked up.

My mother had a great hand in keeping order and keeping lined up. They didn't go to town as often as they do now, and stuff had to be ordered in great bulk.

I remember grinding coffee. We had a coffee grinder in the kitchen and us kids had to grind coffee by the hour, put it in cans, so it'd be ready for the cook for the sheep camps. The herders didn't have time to grind coffee, so it had to be given to them ground.

My mother used to send me over to the neighbors to get a starter of yeast. Her yeast would run out, and she'd send me horseback with a little jar to the neighbors and [I'd] ask the lady for some yeast starter.

Tell me how your mom managed spring cleaning.

When springtime would come, she would get these Indian women and they'd take the curtains down, and they'd brush the cobwebs down and they'd scrub the ceilings in the dining room and kitchen. She'd have them stand on a table and reach up and scrub the ceilings and the window sills. They had a soap called Bonami. These old Indian women would use that to scour the dirt off the windows. Then they'd have to wash the curtains and hang them out, and iron the curtains and put them back up. My mother used to participate in that and have it done.

About how long would it take to get through spring cleaning?

Oh, 2 or 3 days. Us kids, we didn't get involved in that because we had other chores to do. It had to be done by somebody that knew how to do it, and these Indian people were experts. They'd do it the way it ought

to be done because they'd do it for the community. Some of the work done by those original womenfolks is sorely missed. If the people today knew what they're missing.

Is there anything else that Indians were involved in in working in the house that you can remember that we ought to make a record of?

My mother used to get some of the Indian men to come in and boil the lard. They had the strength to pick up the pots; these kettles were heavy and they were dangerous to handle. If you spilled them, you'd burn yourself or set the house on fire.

Later on, it was done outside, but in my time we did it in the kitchen.

My mother used to get the men in here to pull up the carpets, and take the carpet out on the line and beat it with a green willow stick of about an inch and a half in diameter and about 8 feet long. That was part of the spring cleaning.

You had no electricity then. When did this house finally become electrified, as you might say?

It became electrified quite early because my dad bought a storage battery plant in about 1908. It had big jars with lead plates and sulfuric acid, and they had them up in the attic of the tank house. They had a small dynamo run by a gas engine, and that ran the pump to fill the water tank that provided the water for the house. It had a gauge on it.

My brother liked to be fooling around with mechanics, so they made him the man that started the engine, turned it off, put gasoline in and see that the tank was full. Sometimes we'd run short of water and my brother had to go start the engine. If he wasn't right here on tap, they'd get along with short

water. After we got electricity, they put motors on and automatic switches.

How did that change the life of your family?

My mother didn't have to go upstairs and put the youngsters to bed and be sure that the lamp chimneys were all cleaned and that the candles were in the candlesticks, and all that sort of detail. I remember going to school it was a great help. We could study at home because we were able to see, and we didn't have to fill a lamp.

The contrast was very memorable. It was striking because it was so different and gave you the opportunity in the evening to have light that you never had before.

Electricity was available to people and everybody was wanting it. People were always looking to make things better. This was a betterment, an improvement, an advantage and so people would readily take advantage of it.

Did your family buy any electric appliances after having gotten electricity?

Yes. The main thing that I remember was an iron to iron clothes. Before that my mother had these cast-iron hot flatirons. They'd heat them on top of the cook stove, and then use them to iron the clothes. With an electric iron you didn't have to have several flatirons on top of the stove. I remember my mother used to have Indian women come in, and they'd put the irons on the stove and they'd keep changing them. When the iron they were using would get cold, they'd put that back on the stove and take a hot one off and continue the ironing operation. Electricity was a great boon to ironing.

Those clothes were washed on a washboard in a round galvanized tub. My mother used to

get these Indian women, and some of them preferred to use a washboard until they got used to the machine. After they found out how the washing machine would work they gladly made the change. This must have taken place in the mid-teens.

Do you recall when the telephone was first introduced here on this ranch?

That's a long time ago. That must have been along 1905 or 1907. I remember the first telephone line that came into this place was run along the fence posts. They took and nailed a scab on a fence post every so many posts, then nail another scab on and put a single wire and a white insulator on it and then arch it up over the 16-foot 4by-4 or something so you could drive under it with wagons loaded with hay or high loads on a wagon. Had a crank on it and a little dynamo. You had to crank it, and if you wanted to ring the neighbor, you'd ring 2 short and a long, or 3 long, or a short and a long and a short, maybe a long and 2 short and a long—you'd signal like that.

Every family had its own code?

Yes.

Sometimes it was a mess. It was all one wire line. You'd call a neighbor and some other neighbor would hear the ring, so they'd take the receiver down and listen to the conversation—a lot of what they called rubbering. If there was enough of the people get to rubbering, nobody could hear anybody because it would kill the current. I remember people used to get disturbed, and they'd holler "Get off the line!" [laughter] They knew somebody was on. Then you could hear them quietly hang up. I've heard that myself.

Did you talk to your wife a lot on the phone before you married her?

No, I didn't. I didn't have much conversation over the phone with her. I'd call up when I wanted to make a date; she'd call me once in a while. To carry on our courtship, we wrote letters. Nobody could hear that. [laughter]

Then he [my dad] probably had one of the first automobiles in the valley—a 1910 Dorris car manufactured in St. Louis, Missouri—Dorris Motor Car Company. Mr. Dangberg was the first man to own an automobile in Carson Valley; I think it was a 1908 Ford. He also had a Dorris car ahead of my dad. From then on different automobiles were brought in. I remember Pullman, Rambler, Maxwell, Stevens Duryea, Locomobile. Cadillac was an old, old original name which has stood up along with Pierce Arrow.

Where would he have gotten gasoline and other things for it, if it were one of the very first in the valley?

You just don't bring the gasoline; you'd get it at the hardware store in 5-gallon cans. There would be two 5-gallon cans; they'd be rectangular in a box or a case. You'd tear the top of the case off, and he used to take and poke a screwdriver in one corner and wiggle the screwdriver around and make a large enough hole. Then he'd punch it on the corner, and he'd stand the can on its corner on the end and pour it into a tank under the front seat. The tank had a screw top with a big opening; you'd just pull the cushion out of the front seat, and it would expose the tank. There was kind of a little rack that the cushion sat on; you'd pull that out and then the tank'd be exposed. We used to bring the gasoline out here with

horses and a spring wagon, and haul it out from the hardware store to put gas in the car! [laughter]

When you drove the car places, did you have to carry gasoline with you?

Sometimes, and then they'd stop at the different hardware stores, different towns. Mercantile establishments all had gasoline.

What did you do for things like spark plugs and fan belts, other accessories like that?

Well, you had to get them from the agency or drive into the garage. I remember that sometimes you'd make your own—take a line from a team. The fan belts were not rubber V-belts; they were leather. You could lace them or wire them together. I remember I made fan belts...take a line out of your harness and tie it together. If your fan belt wore out, that'd suffice till you could get in and get a real one.

My folks, as soon as anything new would come out, they'd participate in it. Especially when we had electric power by that time.

I'd like to know what kind of philosophy of child rearing your mother may have had.

She and my father were very much alike in raising us kids. I remember her telling me that my father was a good manager and to follow his direction. As they got older, my dad got involved in politics and my mother with the family, and they weren't as close, but they were always of the same philosophy. My father was a great admirer of my mother and her teachings, and vice versa.

My father and my mother told us we would get the worst whipping we ever got if

we would tease any children in school that maybe didn't have the same opportunity, and maybe they didn't have as clean as clothes and as good as shoes [as we had]. Not that we had any advantage; there were other kids that had more advantage over us.

We would be decent and treat everybody respectable, and be kind to everybody. If we were abused, my father used to say, "Take a club and knock them over the head. Don't abuse anybody, but if you're unjustifiably being mistreated, stand up for yourself; Don't just cow down."

My mother believed in that same philosophy. She also tried to teach us. She taught us all how to sew. I can sew my own buttons on if I have to, but my wife does a better job, so I let her do it. [laughter] My mother thought a great deal of my wife, and I've had very fond memories of my mother.

She didn't go to town and buy a lot of our clothes. She would order them from an outfit by the name of Weinstock-Lubin and Company in San Francisco or Sacramento. She would take measurements, and she'd send for these different garments for us. She did it because she'd have to dress us all up and go to town, and in many instances my father wasn't home and many instances he probably didn't want to take the time, so she did it that way. She used to buy our clothes for us, get shirts, underwear and stockings and suits. In order to get a suit of clothes, she'd always take us kids to some clothing store. We used to wear knee pants when we were younger, too. They had a jacket with a sailor collar on it and a white sailor tie. She used to take a great pride in dressing us up.

Your father was a Lutheran and your mother was a Mormon, I believe.

My father's people were Lutheran. My father didn't adhere to any particular church. My mother's people stemmed from the Church of Latter-Day Saints. My grandmother and my grandaunt were prevailed upon by my great-grandmother to be Mormons. They wouldn't do it. Their own father apparently didn't treat them as they should have been when they were little, and that's how they took offense.

What church did you go to when you were being brought up?

My mother taught us. She wouldn't let us have any tea, coffee, chew tobacco or smoke, or liquor. My mother never touched liquor. Of course, my father was different. He had different habits and different ways, but they were compatible when they were raising us kids.

My father and my mother had the same principles and believed in each other until the very end, although their lives weren't together as it should have been.

My mother impressed on us to be kind to each other as someday we'd be scattered far and wide, so that we would have a desire to come back.

My mother was very much against alcohol beverages; she was herself a teetotaler. She wouldn't let us have any tea or coffee or any alcoholic beverages, or smoke or chew. That's the way we were brought up when we were younger.

Did you ever go out and do that kind of thing anyway?

No, not around my mother. I'd gone to parties and did wrong, but she was very strict with this and I don't think it hurt us. I don't begrudge the fact that that's the way that I was

raised. I can smoke; I can trick smoke, turn a cigarette around in my mouth and smoke...us kids smoked sagebrush leaves, horse manure, alfalfa leaves, willow roots.

When I first started high school the kids were smoking tobacco, roll their own cigarettes. So I thought, "I'll smoke, too." I didn't particularly care what brand so I went and bought me one of these cans you put in your pocket of Stag tobacco. I was impressed by the deer on the outside of the can. So I bought that and a pipe and had it in the buggy, and I'd smoke on the way back and forth to school. I didn't smoke much. I didn't like the taste of it in the first place. So I got to thinking, coming across the flat one day by myself, "Why do I want to smoke for?" Then I got to thinking, "My mother, she don't want me to smoke and she thinks I don't smoke. Now am I going to break confidence with her? Start in and resist her desires and go through that?" So I took this pipe and tobacco and threw it out in the sagebrush. That was the end of it.

What about the impact that your mother may have had on your education?

She took a lot of time with us. She helped us learn how to spell and to learn our lessons. She was a great boon to us kids. When we were in high school, she served on the board of education, too.

There were some very able teachers in this community when I and my wife went to school. My wife and I started the same year in high school, and some of the same teachers that finished the 4 years that I went were her first teachers. They'd take a great interest in the girls in the community. They'd teach them how to set a table and how to conduct a household in some detail that maybe some of their parents didn't even know.

They were very helpful people. They didn't seem to be as concerned about their pay as they were to get something done for the kids. That's a contrast as I view today's education. My mother had a horse and buggy of her own. She'd take us kids down to my grandfather's, and go and drive to the neighbors, but not a great deal. She was a good driver and she used to teach us kids how to drive. I remember her teaching me: "Don't slop down and have the lines laying down slack; keep them up and hold your horse."

Then she was a photographer. She had a darkroom and many pictures of Indians, which I have as a collection. She gained the confidence of the Indian people to let her take their pictures. She was good to them.

My mother's aunt was the first woman doctor in the state of Nevada. Many times these Indian families would have sick children, or they'd get hurt or they'd need medical attention; they'd come to my mother. If it was necessary, she'd refer them to her aunt. In some times, she'd get her aunt to come take care of them. She used to get medicine from my aunt and give it to the Indians.

In conclusion about my mother, she said to us as we were growing up that every one of us would finish high school. She said, "I desire for you to go further, but if you don't you're able to go in any direction and carry on. But you have to graduate out of high school." She saw to it that we did.

She never did come back here to live after she once retired and went to Oakland. Her health came to a point where the lower altitude was more or less necessary for her continued health. We used to go down and visit with her and she used to come back up here. She died in 1963.

Did your mother ever try to get you to go to college?

Yes, I started to go to college, and I was going to Davis. My dad took me down there and I got appendicitis on the way down. They took me to the St. Mary's Hospital, which was a little brick building—I think it still stands. It's a nurse's home in Reno, south side of the street from the big hospital. I was put in there overnight. I was ready to go to college and wanted to go, but not determined. After I got that sick spell, I felt homesick and my dad was there with me so I decided I didn't want to go. I wanted to come home.

After I'd come home, I lingered around with this ailment awhile and had to be operated on the following February. I never did go back. I started picking up and getting interested [in ranching]. I was already involved, and I just let myself...I let myself fit in and felt more comfortable. I think it was the greatest opportunity that I ever had in my life to be with my father and take care of the things he had started.

* * * * *

I'd like to know how you acquired an interest in the Washo and managed to learn so much about them over the years.

I had to learn something about them because, when I was a kid, they were my only playmates close by. They were children of the families that were working here for my father on the ranch. We used to go fishing together and hunting. We didn't go hunting with guns; we never went out with the Indian kids with guns.

What did you go out with?

We just went out with dogs to hunt squirrels and have the dogs dig squirrels out. There used to be a big rock wall-rock fence,

we called it. It was built by the rocks that were taken off the field, piled up and used for a fence along the roadway. It was a great habitat for squirrels, and we'd [be] going up and down the road playing and the dogs would see a squirrel, and they'd run into these rock piles. They'd go in there and chirp, and us kids would tear the rock pile down to let the dogs enter to where the squirrels were and the dog would reach down and get the squirrels.

What did you do with the squirrel once you captured it?

They just killed them.

Did you take it home to eat it?

No.

I've been out here and grew up with the Indians. They josh me and talk to me; I can use a few Indian words. So I've had a comfortable, pleasurable, interesting life.

Did your dad ever talk to you about the decision to donate that piece of land that became Dresslerville?

No, he didn't consult me; he and my mother just did it.

I didn't mean that he might consult you; I thought that maybe later on in life he might have discussed with you the reasons why he did, and might have told you something about some of the events that occurred surrounding that.

It was sort of a follow-up that my mother and father had a feeling toward the Washo Indians—that they do something to help

them. They made that contribution with that feeling. That was why it was done.

I heard them discussing that they thought it would be a nice thing to do since the Indians seemed to want to have a place that they could call their own, and a place they could go. Before that, they didn't have a separate piece of ground that they could go and put their house on their land. It was for that reason that my folks deeded that to the Indian tribe.

It wasn't big enough for any farming or any livelihood. It was a place that, in the wintertime, when they weren't working or when they were idle or when they wanted to go home, they could have the cabin—whatever size, make or shape—wickiup or whatever it might have been. That was theirs on their land. They felt that the Indians had that desire, and they gave it to them to satisfy that desire.

* * * * *

We're going to start a section on various positions to which you've been elected or appointed, and honors and awards that you've received. I think you were about to tell me about being elected secretary of the West Fork Water Association. About when was that?

Probably 1920, along in there.

What were your responsibilities?

I was secretary of the West Fork Farmers Union; I was just a boy. Fred Settelmeyer was the president, and I was the secretary. We were handling the hiring and collecting the money to pay the water distributor on the West Fork only. Today we have a court-appointed watermaster [who] takes care of both streams.

Does he behave any differently from that water distributor that you would pay?

He's on year-round pay. We were getting, during the period of time when we had to have water, a man that would see to it that it was turned from one to the other and carry on the distribution.

How did you select the man who would do that?

We went around and got some rancher or somebody that knew something about irrigation. Then we'd collect the money based on acreage of each rancher, contributed to pay this salary for the season. It's paid so much for the season, beginning with the first Monday in June till about October.

I understand that about 1929 or 1930 you secured an appointment in the Carson Valley as a livestock loan inspector. Can you tell me something about that?

I took the appointment from Bob Turrin; he had charge of the loans in this part of the country. I was given the area of Mason Valley, Smith Valley and Carson Valley.

You were elected to the school board in 1932. why did you decide to run for the school board?

I was induced to run to be a school board member because circumstances arose. Didn't seem like anybody wanted to take it; they had various excuses. I didn't intend to take it myself, until finally it was turned down by so many people. I went around to talk to some of them, and they had various excuses, so I said, "Well, if that's the way everybody feels, if you want me to do it, I'll do it." So they put me in and I lasted in there for 25 years.

I felt it was a duty, and I was interested in having good teachers and having good quality education for the children. I've handed my own children their certificates of graduation, and I've stayed in there long enough to hand their children their certificates—my children and grandchildren. I figure that's an accomplishment! [laughter]

I got to be school trustee, and I couldn't make a speech worth \$.05. I learned how and over the years I found myself making speeches. I've made speeches before pretty near every state cattle association in the United States. I got so I didn't have fear.

When I first started, in order to collect my thoughts, I had to hear myself talk. So I'd take my saddle horse and go out here on the hill where I didn't think anybody ever heard me—if they did, they never told me about it—and I'd repeat and repeat, and I'd talk to myself, and I'd emphasize and I'd listen to my voice. That helped me.

I was given the chore of handing out diplomas. I've had the opportunity of handing out diplomas to a lot of my relatives, even to my grandchildren. I was still on the board when I handed out school diplomas to some of my grandchildren. In talking to them I could see the necessity to give these young people confidence and make them feel comfortable. There's too much of a tendency to keep kids under fear. They're afraid to have confidence in themselves.

I used to tell these kids in grammar school—I never handed diplomas to high school—to do things that are honorable, tell the truth. If you work for somebody, do a good job. If you want to be a chimney sweep, that's honorable, but be the best chimney sweep in town. If you want to be a bootblack, it's honorable, but be the best bootblack in town. Somebody is going to hunt for you; you're

going to be in demand. By doing that, you'll make yourself a place in the world.

What do you think is the single most important honor that you've received over all of these years, and why?

I think the most striking one is when I was chosen to be placed in the Hall of Great Westerners by the National Cowboy Hall of Fame. Another one that's very striking is to receive the Golden Spur Award.

Now what's that for—the Golden Spur?

For outstanding accomplishments of being an outstanding westerner.

And I've been president of the American National Cattlemen's Association. There's only one man in the United States can be that at one time. I've been there.

You were honored in a way that few people ever are honored when you had 400 people show up for your birthday party in the summer of 1983. I understand that there were people from all over the West—in fact, perhaps from all over the country—who came to honor you on your eighty-sixth birthday.

Yes.

Who was the man who organized it?

There were so many involved in it, and there was so much vital participation; I really don't know who to lay it to.

That's one of the greatest things I ever had happen because here were people that I went to school with right here, and here was people that I've met far away in different parts and hadn't seen for years. One fellow was a fellow

that worked for me on a piece of property that I owned and afterward sold in California.

It took me by so much surprise. I thought I was going out to eat dinner with some friends, and they take me and dump me into this huge, unrealized, overwhelming circumstance—overwhelming! I really don't remember who all was there, but they were from all over the country—from back east, from Denver and California, from up in adjoining states, as well as my local friends and neighbors. It was done in such a manner that it would overwhelm any human being to receive this. And I gave a response; I hope it was adequate.

[See Appendix A]

2

THE DRESSLER RANCH AND CARSON VALLEY AGRICULTURE

About when did your grandfather turn over the ranch to the sons?

About 1897. Turned it over to them after they were married. You see, I don't exactly remember or don't know, but I think he divided up his estate and gave every one of them [the immediate family] something. And then I think he sold some of the properties to the boys who obligated themselves to pay him off, so he'd have some subsistence for himself. They'd be getting their start [while] helping and maintaining him. Social security and old-age pension and all these things of our modern day were unheard of in that time.

Did your father get the largest portion of the land?

No, I don't think so. I wouldn't venture to say. I know that my grandfather helped my aunts buy property and set them up in different places where they did live. And they sold and moved around, so that I think he

tried to do an equitable job; I don't think he had any favorites.

Since you weren't even born at the time that your grandfather divided up the ranch, you won't have any memories of your own of what his ranch was like. Did your father ever talk to you about it, or did your grandfather talk to you about it? Can you give me a description of the ranch that he held before it was turned over to your father? For instance, can you tell me what kind of livestock he had and why he had those particular types?

Well, naturally it wasn't as big. My dad started here with a string of milk cows, and then he enlarged that. In those days most of the cattle in here were shorthorns. I remember my dad used to milk red shorthorns or roans, and then he had a bull shipped in here, an Ayrshire bull from Wisconsin—it was a calf—to enhance the milk production of his herd. They would keep the calves. The heifers were raised and returned to the dairy herd.

The steers were maintained and grown to maturity and fed hay. [If] they didn't have any grain to feed, they fed them hay and they had to keep them longer, and they were older when they sold them.

For instance, there were cattle run out here in these Pine Nut Hills. My uncle, Dad's brother, used to be a cowboy who worked for some people in Smith Valley. He told me that they drove steers in June; they'd get fat up there in the mountains, and they'd drive them all the way down through Dayton and up to Virginia City.

All the livestock that were raised in this part of the country that weren't locally killed were driven to a railhead to be shipped out. They were driven to Virginia City or to Carson where they were loaded on a train and dispatched from there and sent to the Pacific Coast areas.

What kind of livestock was your grandpa running? Were any of them shorthorns?

Shorthorn, mostly. There were some crosses, but predominantly shorthorn.

Did he have sheep?

My dad's the one that picked up the sheep, started with sheep.

They used cattle; they were more or less what's termed dual purpose. There used to be a herd of those milking shorthorns, and then there were red poles, and there were different breeds that they used to use...they call them dual purpose. They were grown to maturity and milked, those that were giving plenty of milk. They weren't too concerned about how much milk that each cow gave; if they weren't getting enough, they'd milk some more.

Your grandfather obviously had to raise hay for the cattle and for the horses as well. What kind was he growing? He had alfalfa, didn't he?

No, the alfalfa wasn't predominant here. It was produced later, and had to be handled different. Most of this hay that was in here in the early days was native grass. Then they introduced timothy and red top and giant red clover. Those grasses were some of the first to be introduced.

People were induced to raise timothy for race horses and betting on races [in Virginia City]. Washoe Valley was the location of one famous racing stallion called Silver Bullion. A man by the name of Winters owned it. The old Winters home is still intact, and just here lately I noticed it's being reconstructed, and I've been told they propose to run a restaurant there.

So timothy came down into this valley, as well. Did your grandfather raise any race horses himself, or was the timothy for his cattle and other livestock?

Well, he said he used to like to run races. You see, people used to have a bent for recreation and betting, so I think while my grandfather wasn't a race horse enthusiast, he raised good horses. And they took pride in raising driving horses, fast trotters, spring wagon horses that were a little bit bigger. Like my father had a black team, a couple of black mares that he called Bessie and Jessie; that was the fancy driving team. Then he had another set of bay horses called Jim and Con; they were spring wagon horses. They were a little bit tough; they'd run away. I think my dad said that he named them after some convicts! [laughter]

Runaway convicts?

Yes.

I know a lot of German immigrants raised potatoes when they first came to the Carson Valley. Was your grandfather one of those who had a potato crop?

To begin with, the reason for Carson Valley agriculture was they saw the opportunity; people knew how to farm and could recognize the resources. In this area we have to depend on irrigation. And as they came across the plains, they recognized this place because it afforded an opportunity to raise crops and have a ready disposal for them—ready sale. And that induced them to stay here and start agriculture. Virginia City was [founded] in 1859. My grandfather came in 1860.

But in order to facilitate agriculture in the days that these people came here, they had to have horses; there was no such thing as a gasoline engine. All the transportation was overland and had to be animal drawn, either oxen or horses. So that was the reason for the many different breeds of horses and the development of them. They had their driving horses which were a lighter type of an animal; they'd trot along and then could go long distances on a trot. These big, heavy workhorses would trudge along and pull heavy loads and go slower. They used them in freighting. In order to have horses and in order for a man to have a freight team, he had to have a source of supply of horses to pull his wagons and conduct his operation.

Did your grandpa raise horses for sale?

He raised horses, I think they called them Bonners. Those are horses that were

used in the buggies and spring wagons. Then there was some horses introduced in here before my time, but my memory goes back to Shires, and there were Percherons, and a lot of these horses were crossed. They had heavier type horses; some of them weighed 1600 to 1800 pounds. And for a driving horse, they'd weigh 1250, 1300-1400 pounds. That was the difference; they could stand to trot along and pull lighter loads and go farther and faster. They used them if they had business in Carson City. They'd leave here about 4:00 in the morning and drive to Carson City—it'd take about 3½ to 4 hours—and then drive back or else stay overnight.

In those days, agriculture was all propelled by flesh and blood energy. [It] had to be from the brawn and muscle of man to hoe the ground and hold the plow. They walked behind the plow, the single plow with handles on [and] 2 horses. Then they come along with what they called a gangplow, and they put more horses on; they used to have 8 and 10 horses on the plow and 2 shares. That's what my father finally used after he got going.

Did your grandpa use a gangplow? About when was that introduced into the Carson Valley?

He may not have had too much to do with the gangplow, but there were gangplows introduced in here during my grandfather's days. It was called the Eureka Gang; it was built over in Stockton, California.

Did the way things were done in the valley change when they brought the gangplow in?

It just made it easier. They could plow more land and get more work done sooner. When they had single plows each man had 2 horses, and you had to put lots of men walking

behind lots of plows. When you concentrated and put 2 shares together and put 6 to 8 head of horses on, one man took care of the job. And it just [went] from there.

Were you able to grow any different kinds of crops?

No.

You said your grandpa raised horses for sale. Did he specialize in one particular kind of horse?

Not any particular breed, but draft-type horses; what they called draft-type were a heavier horse. There were very few of them were purebreds. They were brought overland from the east by the immigrants. My grandfather, being here, [had to] get his supply of breeding horses from some other source.

With all those horses around, he probably had to have a blacksmith right here on the property. Did he have a smith shop or a blacksmith who worked for him?

Every ranch had its little building and a bellows and an anvil and a forge. Bellows was pumped by hand like a pump and was a pear-shaped device with flat bottom and flat top. It would collapse—raise it up and down and it'd blow air to fan the fire to heat the iron.

They had to have blacksmiths. They had to know how to set tires and make wagon wheels and repair wagons and buggies. A lot of them devised different ideas on building a plow or building cultivators or some of those things. Then there were old-fashioned grain drills and hay rakes that they used. They've all been improved on. Some of the early-day hay rakes were dump rakes and you had to dump it by

hand. Then they come along with a self-dump hay rake; that was quite an innovation...made it easier and made them wider. So all this hay had to be mowed. There was an old mowing machine called the Buckeye mowing machine. It was made way before my time, and some old remnants and old pieces are around yet.

You still have some here on your property?

I've got 1 or 2 on the ranch here that I've picked up. They weren't bought by my people, but I found them in isolated places and brought them in just for keepsake or novelty.

Now the remains of that blacksmith shop, are they still here on the Dressler property?

Yes.

Was it the same blacksmith shop that your grandfather had?

No, I don't think so.

Did your grandpa raise hogs?

Yes. He had a dairy. He was like all the rest of these farmers. They all had milk cows, and they had other cattle. In those days milk cows were the dairy cattle, and the cattle that ran on the range, they'd call them stock cattle. The younger heifers and replacements from the dairy were ran on the range for the first year or so. After they were old enough to be replacements in the dairy, they'd keep them closer by as they freshened and had their calves. I remember my father breaking heifers. Dairies were all milked in open corrals in most of the year, and then they all had barns and stanchions where they'd milk them inside if they had to. But most of the milking was done on the outside with the open bucket

and a stool that was strapped to you, with one peg. You'd hold the milk bucket between your legs—a 5-gallon milk bucket—milk that full, and then dump it into a milk can through a strainer. From there it dumped into a tank and run through a centrifugal cream separator. Before my day they used to have what they called pan dairies. They'd pour the milk in these pans and let it set overnight and then skim it and pour it into churns and make butter.

Was butter the principle product of the dairy operations?

It was here, yes.

What would you do with the milk after you had made butter?

Feed it to pigs—buttermilk, skim milk.

When did [your family] finally stop raising hogs and why?

Hogs were raised here not too many years ago. There are quite a few hogs raised in this area yet. It was a requirement more or less. If you had skim milk, you had to dispose of it. [You] didn't waste anything; you had a place to put it in the hogs. When you got the hog, skim milk wouldn't fatten them; you would supplement. Then that would give rise to the bran. You'd get that from the flour mill, and get barley and roll it. They used to cook barley in big cast-iron cauldrons and use it for feed. The animal agriculture started with the chickens, hogs, sheep, cattle; and a lot of the farms had farm flocks. There were many thousands of sheep in the ranges in this part of the country. These animals were used for food. The horse and a hybrid called the mule did the labor. They brought the hay from the stack to

the field to feed the cows, to tend the sheep, to take the cream to the creamery, take the milk to the creamery, take the hay to market, take the grain to the flour mills and all this thing. And in that instance, the horse was probably one of the most important parts of agriculture. The horse was part of the ranch or farm. Everybody had a few mares, and they used to breed these mares to centrally owned stallions and they'd raise their own replacement horses. If they didn't raise enough of their own horses, they'd buy some from the neighbors. My father used to buy horses from different neighbors. They'd use them on their own farm, break them, get them ready for use; then you could go and buy them and replace the effort...your energy source. You had to have a certain number of horses depending on the size of your farm. If you were putting up hay, you had to have 5 hay wagons; if it was a smaller place, maybe 1 hay wagon with 2 horses. You didn't have to go back east and ship the energy in or go and do like we do today.

Humanity has gotten itself into a fix. From self-sustaining agriculture propelling its own way, we're [now] dependent on an oil well for everything we do and everything we eat. You can't even run your safety razor without a drop of oil. You can't milk a cow without oil on your machinery. Your automobile won't run without oil. Your electric transformers won't function without oil. So I say we've gotten ourselves into a position where we better start learning and filling a void that exists in our information that's coming from our schools to our youngsters, our people. They take too much for granted; [there's] too much apathy. The bus is there to pick them up in the morning because it's there. Who cares how it got there?

When I was a boy, I had to hitch up my horse or I had to get on a saddle horse to go to

school. I drove 8 miles to Gardnerville to go to high school. When my brother and sisters got old enough to go, my dad bought us a Model T Ford. I started out by going with a saddle horse, and to a buggy, and a motorcycle. My sister and brother came along, then Dad got us a Model T Ford. We wore out a couple of Model T Fords going to high school.

About how old were you then?

Sixteen. I started high school when I was 16 and I graduated when I was 20. I started high school in 1914. He must have bought us the first Ford in 1916. I think we were the first family to go to school in a Ford.

Let's go back to the horses for a moment. How many horses did it take to operate the Dressler ranch?

Along with pack animals, driving horses, saddle horses and actually active broke workhorses, it took about 70 to 90 head.

About how many of them would be saddle horses?

Probably 10, and several pack mules. The rest of them were animals used for mares to raise colts and yearling colts, 2-year-olds. You didn't break these horses to work them until they were 3 years old. You had to have a backlog of young animals if you were raising your own. You had to maintain 40 head of horses. I used to help hitch up and see that about 40 head of horses would get hitched up, and men driving them directed to their various jobs that conduct the haying operation when I was a young man. I was 11 to start with.

[My dad] would be gone for a day or so; he'd say, "Now I want you to tell Mr. so-and-so

that I want him to do so-and-so." I didn't do too much supervising; I was told what to tell people. In my teens I was more or less given the lead to be head mower man or direct some of the fellows who were putting up hay.

About how many wagons did you have?

I remember Dad used to have 8 or 9 wagons, but he'd get the neighbors to come help for a day or 2 in the thick of trying to get the hay off the ground before it got too dry, and so the next irrigation could take place and start the second and third crop. A lot of management had to go into all this.

Did your dad raise oats to feed the horses?

Yes. We raised oats.

About how many acres of oats would it require to keep all those horses fed?

You only fed the horses oats when they were working. When they weren't working, they were turned out and we'd only use 4 or 5 teams to feed with. That was the slack period. All this time these other horses had to be pastured and fed. It didn't take too many acres of oats—I don't remember. Forty acres of oats would feed lots of horses. I'd say maybe 15 to 20 acres would be plenty of oats to feed all the horses that would need to be fed oats. The rest of the time they were well fed on hay. But when they were working in the hay field pulling mowing machines day after day, except Sunday, then you had to feed them. Sometimes you had to change teams—work one team half a day and the next team the other half.

Where on the Dressler ranch was the oat field located?

We didn't have any special place; we put oats down on the river bottom over here north of the barn. It just depended on where we'd take a notion to plant it. Select a piece of ground that maybe was running out of alfalfa. The stand was dying out.

Why would the stand of alfalfa die out?

A stand of alfalfa was only good for about 8 years. It just naturally dies out. Other plants come along and crowd it, get too much water on it...various things happen that kill that stand. So you have to plow it up. Then you plant grain—wheat, barley, oats—the small grains.

[My grandfather] did grow corn, but corn very seldom matured because corn has to ripen and dry. You don't have a long enough period [here]. You can raise silage corn some years here, but you've got to go into a lower elevation and warmer and longer growing season.

That was probably something that he had learned in Minnesota. He probably figured if he could grow corn there, he could grow it here.

Yes, he brought the corn with him. Naturally, he'd try it.

Years ago people raised their own fruit. They didn't have canned fruit. It had to be transported, and it was too costly. Everybody had their own orchard; they raised their pears and apples. They even dried apples and pears and put these things up. I remember my mother used to put up hundreds of quarts. Even my wife, when she first came down here, put up hundreds of quarts of applesauce, plums and prunes. They had German prunes; it was a sort of plum. Then they used to put them on trays on top of a roof and let them dry.

It wasn't extensively done, but there was much dried fruit used. That was a product that could be shipped and handled. I remember you could buy dried peaches in a 100 pound burlap bag. We used them at the camps and cook houses because they'd keep—dried peaches, dried plums, dried apricots, dried apples.

You had an orchard right here on your property, I take it.

Yes, my grandfather had a big orchard right north of where this house is. It finally dwindled after he left here, and my dad didn't see fit to take care of it. It didn't pay. The roads got better and fruit was more available.

There was a large orchard here in the valley. [It] belonged to a man by the name of H. F. Dangberg. They called him the old man Dangberg. He was the father of Fred and John and George and Clarence and Mrs. Greenfield. That was over on the East Fork.

It was a commercial orchard?

Yes. He'd put a crew of men to work, and then he'd go to Carson and sell apples. He used to haul them down there in 4-horse team loads; they were boxed here.

I know that your grandfather raised sheep, but I'm not sure when he began running sheep. When would that have been?

My grandfather never ran sheep. He might have had a few flock sheep, but he wasn't in the sheep business.

Was there a reason why he didn't? I understand that a lot of other ranchers did.

The sheep in those days were raised by people that made it a business. To be in the

sheep business, it took about 1,000 to 5,000 ewes. My grandfather's operation didn't run sheep at all. He had the dairy cattle and he had the hay and the garden stuff, and he had a blacksmith shop that he rented in Sheridan. We have a picture of it, and there's a good picture of it in Grace Dangberg's book. Grace Dangberg did a commendable job of writing history, and she's got a lot of pictures that remind me of some of the things that were here when I was a boy.

Did your grandfather ever talk about any changes that may have occurred as a consequence of the silver mines being tapped out in Virginia City?

No, but he was a great enthusiast for flour mills. His brother-in-law, Falcke, had a flour mill at the foot of Kingsbury Grade. And he helped promote a flour mill that was down below Genoa. They took an interest in developing creameries. They had to have a follow-up to get a product that could be shipped further. The railroad coming into Carson City gave an outlet to Carson Valley products to the world. When you put it on the railroad, it'd go mostly to metropolitan areas that were developing in California.

Did he have a financial interest in these flour mills?

Yes, he did. They weren't all too successful.

Did he himself raise any wheat or other grains for the flour mills?

Yes. By reason of them raising wheat, they had to have an outlet to it. They had to convert it to flour to sell it.

Do you know about what percentage of his property would have been in wheat or other grain for flour?

It would vary. The grain was a sideline, but it was a factor in the economy. I used to hear those old people talk that they didn't like to have all their eggs in one basket. If they had some grain, they had some pigs.

They used to sell lots of eggs. My grandmother used to raise chickens. They used to use wheat to feed the chickens; it took quite a bit of wheat to feed chickens. Then they'd get animal bones and burn the animal bones and throw that in the chicken yard, so the chickens could get limestone to make better eggs. They'll have a soft shell if you don't give them limestone. They didn't have all these mixtures that we have today—supplemental feeds.

Did your grandma Dressler get to keep the egg money? That's common practice in the rest of the country that the farm woman got to keep the egg money; that's why they had chickens.

She very likely kept what she needed to buy clothing and buy household needs and stuff like that. That chicken money went a long ways toward that end, I'm sure.

You had mentioned that your grandfather was not quite as acquisitive as David, but that he had acquired a couple of hundred acres of land himself.

The number of acres is kind of incidental; I don't know whether it was more or less. He seemed to be a fellow that didn't want to be too heavily involved in responsibilities. He was responsible, but there are people that

become satisfied and happy with a moderate amount, and I think my grandfather Park was one of those fellows. He had a dairy, he had pigs, he put up hay, he sold baled hay, he sold grain. They had fruit trees; they probably sold apples. He had a woodlot up on the mountain in back of his place where they cut wood. In those days, the only fuel you had was wood—pine wood or pinon wood. That was the means of heating their homes: fireplaces and stoves. I remember my grandfather Park used to sit and read the paper and smoke a corncob pipe in front of the fireplace.

Did he ever talk to you about how he managed that woodlot?

There was a more or less set pattern. They'd cut the wood in late summer or early fall when they were through harvesting. They'd cut it and get it down, and work it to stove wood size. They'd cut it in 4-foot lengths and bore holes in it and blast it apart if it was too hard to split—bore a hole in it and put black powder and a fuse in and split it. Then from there they used a wedge and sledge hammer. Then they'd haul it down on wagons to their house or the back yard, and then they'd cut it up. Each fork would be cut in 2 places to make three 16-inch length sticks, so that'd fit in the stove. Then the blocks or the knots or bigger pieces, they'd put them inside and use them in the fireplace.

Would he deliver the wood, or would he have people come by to buy it?

I don't think he bothered too much about delivering wood. He might have sold some wood up on the mountain after it was corded up. The wood choppers used to chop the trees

down, cut them up in 4 foot lengths, split them up and then pile the wood of the trees—limbs and split trunk part of the tree—in ricks. Four foot high, 4 foot wide and 8 feet long was a cord. If there was enough wood there, they'd pile the rick. Some of these ricks were maybe 3 and 4 and 5 cords long, 4 foot high. The width was determined by the length of the cut.

They'd load that on wagons and bring it down to the ranches. Nearly all of them had a woodshed where they'd cut up the wood and store enough of it under shelter to last through storm periods. If they needed more and they got towards spring or they run out a little bit, they could always get some more split up and put back in. They'd get some of these Indian friends who lived on the ranch; you'd go and call them—they'd be up at the camp—and they'd split some wood. They'd help you if you needed help. But in the wintertime, the Indians didn't particularly attach themselves to jobs like feeding cattle all winter. Most of them didn't do that. But quite a few of them lived on these farms and ranches. They'd come and help load the hay and feed.

In those days a lot of these farmers didn't feed cattle all day. They'd load the hay off the stack onto a wagon and take [it] down to the field and throw it out on top of the snow and let the cattle eat it. They'd do that maybe twice a day. All these farmers had dairies, and they had to milk those cows. So they'd go out, and they'd do the feeding in the morning after milking and then they'd feed again. They'd do the chores and go in the house and that was it. But they did have radios; they didn't have a telephone; they didn't have an automobile. They only went to town when they really had to. In bad weather, the roads weren't open.. .sometimes they wouldn't get up to Sheridan

for a day or so. Kids had to go to school over the top of snow drifts.

My grandfather Dressler had 2 or 3 ranches scattered around. My grandfather Park had his all on one block. He had a nice orchard, and he had 2 nice barns; he'd fill them with hay. He had good workhorses. He did have cattle; they ran cattle out on the East Fork. They mingled...the Farmers and the Parks and Dresslers, and drove their cattle out here across the East Fork River beyond Mud Lake, across the river at Young's Crossing; put the cattle out on the east side. That was before the days of the U.S. Forest Service. They'd gather them and drive them into the higher part during July, and commence to get into the middle of July, they'd take them back up into the higher mountains.

Who would tend the cattle back there?

My uncle Dolph, my dad's brother used to do quite a bit of riding. My uncle Dolph was the man that broke the horses and tended to the cattle and did the cowboying during my dad's and their early years. Then after time went on they bought their own ranches. After their father had given them a start, they branched off and went in different directions.

Did you have to worry very much about cattle rustling?

No, I don't think so. There was concern about cattle being taken and moved off, but there was no great theft because there wasn't room to do it. Everybody mingled, and sometimes these cattle would drift over in another area. Some of them might get over in Smith Valley or might get into Antelope Valley, or they might wander over and mix with cattle that came into the mountains from

California. I don't think there was too much thievery going on. But there was in Nevada; there were people known to be cattle thieves, but you read in history where they caught them and put them in the penitentiary.

In those days the area was wide open. Today the cattle are turned out and brought back in and counted and accounted for. In those days, some of them were out on the vast areas that maybe they didn't see, maybe they didn't get branded when they should. Cattle called mavericks...a yearling that had never been marked. Who owns him? Whose is he? Whoever finds him first and puts his brand on owns him. I don't think it was ever a very devastating circumstance.

Do you know how your father gained an interest in sheep?

One thing that would have inspired him was that there were 2 crops. He could sell wool and mutton, so there was 2 kinds of income. The lambs would be sold in the fall of the year and throughout the winter. The rest of them would have to consume some of the hay that his ranch provided, and they would be sold. Then when we sheared, he'd have an opportunity to sell the wool. so it afforded him 2 crops.

Do you know when he made the decision to get into sheep?

It had to be about 1905. There were numerous other herds. The Dangberg people had sheep. There were sheep out in Smith Valley, and there were sheep around Reno. There were other herds of sheep, like the Park, the Jacobsens, the Dangbergs, the Bordas, the Uhaldes and an outfit called the Pete Irabarne Sheep Company. There was people by the

name of Sorenson. He had one band of sheep, and he raised a family here. And there was Fritz Elges and Harry Curtz who had sheep.

Your father would have had their experience to draw upon when he decided to establish his own herd.

Well, he developed his own experience because I don't think any of these people were descendants from sheep enterprises. They entered sheep and built their own enterprise. Being livestock oriented, they'd get them, put them on the range and feed them. If they needed them sheared, they'd get crews.

An Indian by the name of Ed Rube had a crew of Indians; 16 to 20 men would go around. They'd transport them on a 4-horse wagon from place to place. When the shearing crew came to your ranch, you had to feed them. My mother used to handle the cooking outfit. After the family commenced to get numerous, she couldn't stay there and take care of all of us kids and put our lunches up without having help, so we used to have quite a few Chinese cooks. We had white cooks, and we had hired girls and people that would supplement because of the number of meals that had to be prepared. In those days we didn't have refrigeration either. [We] had to corn a lot of the beef, and the beef would be delivered by a wagon and horses around the valley. There were 2 butcher shops here in town.

This Ed Rube, was he a local Indian?

Yes, he was [from] Antelope Valley. He had a brother by the name of Henry Rube and Willy Rube. I can't remember all their names.

So the entire crew were all Washos?

Yes, they were Washo. Some of them would be Paiute.

What period of time would the Indians go around and shear the sheep?

From the beginning of the 1920s to the late 1930s.

Your father had to make some changes in his own land in order to accommodate sheep, is that correct?

Not necessarily. He just put the sheep on the land; alfalfa lent itself to sheep. In the fall of the year, they'd bring the lambs down that needed fattening. They'd separate them from their mothers and they'd herd them in separate bands on the alfalfa. Alfalfa is a highly gaseous sort of plant. It forms gas in these animals' stomachs, and they bloat and [die] if you're not careful. The alfalfa would be on the third crop, and they'd put these lambs out and let them run out into the tall alfalfa for 15 minutes. They'd take the dogs and run them back and hold them for 15 or 20 minutes. Then they'd let them enter again. They'd keep doing that all day long. It was quite a chore to herd lambs on the alfalfa.

Did you have mostly Basque sheepherders?

The Basque people that came here were the most dependable. My father depended on Basque help to conduct his operation. People came here as immigrants and worked for the people, and they had sheep, so they made sheepherders out of them. These folks would take a great interest in doing a good job herding the sheep. They'd go out and stay in the hills for months on end. Most of them had 2 or 3 dogs and a burro to move their camps

around. Of course, they had to have a camp tender and somebody to bring the bread to them.

Was it necessary for your father to acquire more land when he decided to turn to herding sheep?

He just went and got additional land. As he expanded his enterprise, he expanded his land ownership. When he started in the sheep and cattle business, before the Forest Service, they could go anywhere. Some of my dad's sheep were herded clear over into Summit City Canyon. That's a deep gorge on the other side of the Blue Lakes, down on the Mokelumne drainage.

Your father also bought some rangeland in the Pine Nut Mountains, I believe.

He bought some land that belonged to a man named Evans, not too far out to the edge of the Pine Nut Mountains. He was a colored man. He had a cabin out there and he used to cut wood. He was a very old man. He passed away and the property came up for sale, and my dad bought it. He bought it together with some property in Smith Valley. He bought it in partnership, [but] my dad bought the other partners out because it lent more value to my dad separately than it did with partners in Smith Valley. That's up in the high ridge in the center part of Pine Nut east of here.

Now what sorts of problems did he experience in running sheep that might have been different from those that are attendant to having a herd of cattle?

In those days they didn't have as many problems as they do now. There were no BLM, no Forest Service.. .no government interference. If you hired a man to herd sheep

[and he] told you he was a sheepherder; he was a sheepherder. He was ready to go out there and be a sheepherder, and stay out there and bring fat lambs in. That was his ambition. A good many of those people came here as young fellows, 19, 20 years old, and they'd save their money. There were instances where there're maybe 2 or 3 brothers and they'd herd sheep for different people, and they'd pool their money together and buy a band of sheep. One of them would herd the sheep; sometimes they could take and put them in the band with an owner's sheep. Most of the time there was no BLM to interfere; the range was open. They'd save money, and borrow money. They didn't have to go to the bank; they'd borrow it from other people that were herding sheep. They'd get started that way. One fellow'd do the herding, and the other one take care of camp.

Obviously sheep had to be more closely attended than cattle; you had to have a shepherd present.

That's right, but when you could get dependable people there was no problem. I used to like the sheep business when I was a kid. I used to tend camp and help herd sheep. Even when I was in high school, I used to help my dad drive sheep from the ranch 3 miles to the shipping corral.

How much property did your father start with?

Between 300 and 400 acres. At the peak of land ownership, he had 33,000 acres scattered in 5 counties: Douglas and Lyon in Nevada; Mono, Alpine and Amador in California.

He joined with several other local ranchers in forming a bank which was in competition with the Douglas County Bank. Was that the Farmers Bank?

Farmers Bank of Carson Valley.

Did he ever talk to you about his reasons for helping to found a bank?

No, I was just a young boy when that took place. The group of people bought stock and put up the money to provide the stock. They didn't buy the bank; they put up money and formed a stock company and started the bank.

That bank later on helped finance the Smith Valley operation, didn't it?

My father was president and director, and I'd say it had nothing to do with Smith Valley. Being a director of a bank didn't give you any personal advantage of the bank. Being a director of a bank is a disadvantage to the man that wants to borrow money from that bank. He borrowed money from a banker friend, Richard Kirman, of Farmers and Merchants Bank of Reno.

When was that Smith Valley land purchased?

Either 1911 or 1912. They formed a partnership. My dad was a third interest. A man by the name of Kirman owned a third, and the other third was divided among 3 other men who were partners in it. I remember there was a man by the name of Charlie Lewis; he was the manager. He stayed over there, but he didn't live there permanently. They had a foreman. One of the first ones was a man by the name of Mike Sullivan, and another by the name of Art Nesmith, and another by the name of Julius Bunkowski who raised a family in Smith Valley.

I know that you did some extensive traveling for your father over a period of several years after you had graduated from high school in helping

him build up his herd. Can you describe that process for me?

The first experience was when I was 14 years old. He took me with a train load of sheep to Chicago. I rode in the caboose and with the rest of the people. In those days people attended the shipment. If the train'd stop, you'd run alongside the cars and see if there were any of [the animals] down. You had a 6 foot long prod pole with a ferule on the end; you could poke them and get them up. If there were too many down, you could get in and straighten them up. Sometimes the train would stop suddenly; it would knock them down. If you load them carefully you didn't have too much trouble, but they had to be unloaded every so often.

Somebody from the ranch always had to accompany them?

That was the custom, yes. You could get somebody that was going who would take care of his own and yours, too. After you got back east, where they got more numerous shippers, they provided a pullman car and an old chair car. You could ride a chair car clear across the continent if you wanted to sit up all night, but if you wanted a pullman it'd cost more, and the colored porter would make up the beds every night. You'd have a pullman compartment or a berth.

Where did you deliver the sheep?

We delivered them to a commission firm called Knollin Livestock Commission Company in Chicago. Turn the sheep over to them, they sell them and you get the proceeds. Accompanying a shipment was necessary because you would see to it that they were watered. It was cold when we went; you'd

have to turn the water on and see if there's any dead ones or anything. You count them when you get ready to load, and they'd have to be unloaded every 36 hours and rest for at least 12 and then reloaded again.

When we left Reno, we went to Ogden; we unloaded. From Ogden we went to Laramie, Wyoming, and from Laramie we went to Valley, Nebraska. From Valley we went to Kirkland, Illinois, and unloaded at a big feed yard, and from there they were dispatched. They were taken in groups, a carload at a time or so many head.

When was it no longer necessary to send somebody along to accompany the livestock?

My dad didn't make a practice of that. Some people thought it was a good idea to ship them east and get more money than they were getting in the West, but after my dad made about one trip back there, that ended that. He sold his lambs to packers in the West.

So what did the 2 of you do on that one trip you made to Chicago?

We had a room in the Morrison Hotel in Chicago. He stayed there till the business transactions were all over with, and then we went to New York City where he visited his aunt.

This is the first time you'd been out of Nevada or California?

No. That was 6 years after the fire and earthquake. My mother used to take us kids every year to visit with my grandparents down in Hayward for a week or so.

Later on you began to do some traveling for your father without his accompanying you to buy livestock throughout the West and bring

it back here. Can you tell me something about that?

I never went on any trips by myself. He took me with him when he went to Fulton, Missouri. Previous to that, I had made one trip to Des Moines, Iowa to buy some polled Hereford range bulls. There was an old man by the name of Myron Chambers, the man whom my brother was named after. My dad didn't want me to travel by myself, so he had this old man accompany me. We went back to Des Moines Iowa, and we bought our first polled Hereford range bulls from Mr. Warren Gammon, the originator of the polled Hereford breed.

What year was that?

In May of 1919.

What is a range bull?

They're registered bulls, but they're turned loose on the range with commercial cattle. When you have a certain bull that in your judgment is an outstanding animal, you select a certain number of cows and put them in his herd and keep track of the breeding. That's a means of keeping track of your registration. If you have them run pell-mell like they do with range bulls, why, you don't know what the sire or dam was of any of the calves.

So how many of them did you buy?

I think it was 25 head.

Your father turned them loose with the shorthorns?

He didn't turn them loose with his registered shorthorn, no. We already had

Divide Cumberland; that was his herd bull for the shorthorns.

I bought these polled range bulls in May of 1919, and he bought the other cattle in December of 1919.

Were those the first Herefords in the valley?

No, the Dangberg Company had Herefords before we did.

Did they get theirs from the same source?

Yes, they got theirs first. My dad bought the cattle for my start from the same breeder in Missouri that the Dangberg herd came from. They maintained a herd from the start they got from this man Collier from Fulton, Missouri.

Did you do any more traveling for your father or with him in order to buy livestock or for any other business associated with the ranch?

I went back on 2 or 3 different occasions and bought range bulls in Iowa and Illinois, and shipped them out here for our own range cattle.

I'd like you to develop this whole process for me, beginning with the decision to bring in polled Herefords and then the process that you followed over the years since.

The reason that I was inspired with polled Herefords is because polled means born without horns. These Hereford cattle that my dad bought me to start with were horned cattle. After we had used these polled Hereford range bulls for our commercial cattle, I got another herd bull. I bought him from A. C. Byars. He had a herd of polled Herefords in Lavina, Montana. I bought

a herd bull from him, and I crossed them on my horned cows, and about half of the offspring were polled. From there I just kept increasing. I never went all out for polls. One time I bought a few extra cows, but my herd was developed and built by keeping the heifer calves and replacements from the original herd. I had it built up to about 400 head one time.

Then dwarfism came about. Dwarfism was a damaging thing. These cattle had the dwarf gene, so we had to figure out a way to correct that. There was a man by the name of J. C. McCann; he worked for the American Hereford Association, and he discovered that there was a certain gene in these animals that was producing dwarfs. If you could get away from that gene you'd be clear, so they had what they called "dirty" cattle and "clean" cattle. I had him come out here and work the pedigrees over; he could tell by the pedigrees. He picked them out, and I had to dispose of half of my herd in order to get a clean herd again. The dwarf animals were disposed of by selling them as rapidly as I could, economically. I never did build my herd back up again to where it was.

I'd like you to give me some years for some of these events. Let's start with your acquisition of the first polled Hereford herd bull that you brought in. When was that?

I'd say along 1925, somewhere in the middle 1920s.

About when did the dwarfism begin to manifest itself?

Dwarfism began menacing the Hereford breeders and me somewhere along in 1945, middle 1940s, and from then on until they finally disposed of it in the 1950s.

So you'd had a good 15, maybe 20 years before it first began to appear.

Yes.

How large had your polled Hereford herd become by the mid-1940s?

I never did have an exclusive polled Hereford herd. My herd was balanced; not exactly balanced, but I kept crossing for various reasons. I was trying to carry on experiments to develop conformation.

You didn't really care whether they had horns or not, then?

I was trying to get a good horned Hereford type without horns. That was my ambition. I would cross back and forth. The first polled bulls didn't have the good conformation that they have today. Today we have polled Herefords that are just as good as a lot of horned Herefords. Some of our best cattle are the product of very careful selection, whether they be horned or polled. There's times when in the same show horns and polls have shown against each other. I remember in one class in Kansas City one year the polled Hereford bull took first place in the class. Then they decided to show them separate. Now they've got 2 breeds, 2 sets of breeders, but they work together; they're compatible.

How did the dwarfism begin to show itself here in your herd? You'll have to explain to me just what you mean by dwarfism.

These animals were small, they were knock-kneed; they never grew big. They'd call them snorters; they'd breathe hard. Some would grow to half the size they should.

They all had kind of a bulldog head; it was easy to tell. If a cow would have one of those calves, we'd take her to market along with the calf. We were working on it by ourselves by observation when J. H. McCann came out with that discovery. [They found that] dwarfism was in *all* breeds—shorthorns, Angus, Herefords.

McCann came out here to the Carson Valley?

Yes.

Did he come to your ranch?

Came right out here and stayed in this house and spent some days here while we went through our herd.

You went over the records?

Took the records one by one, cow by cow, right out in the chute. [laughter]

What kind of a financial impact did that have on your ranch—the dwarfism.

Well, it hit me pretty hard. I had cattle that, before they were determined dwarfy, were probably worth at that time \$650, \$700 apiece. As soon as they were determined dwarfy, they were worth half that much.

What percentage of your herd turned out to be dwarfy?

About half of it, out of about 450.

That's 450 of the polled Herefords, I suppose.

Well, they'd be polled or horned. We just changed and got non-dwarf pedigree bulls.

You could tell, after you studied. We used to raise most of our own bulls. In order to produce a dwarf you had to have a cow with a dwarf gene and a sire with a dwarf gene. So if you had a topsire clean, you can breed him to a whole herd of dwarf cows, and there won't be any dwarfs. It wasn't much of a problem to get rid of dwarf commercial cattle.

Now you said that you had to dispose of about half of your herd. Would that have been in the early 1950s?

Yes. Dwarfism was eliminated by getting busy with the purebred herds and eliminating them. It wasn't necessary to introduce exotics into this country to eliminate dwarfism. It could have been done and it would've worked. We live in a temperate zone, and the English breeds of cattle are adaptable to this temperate climate. The Santa Gertrudis was a breed of cattle developed by the King ranch down in Texas where they couldn't raise other cattle. See, they were tick resistant. The Santa Gertrudis was developed to live in the South and the Texas area where Texas ticks were prevalent. That's what introduced the Brahmans, southern cattle. A Brahma animal sweats through his hide like a horse. Your ordinary English breed of cattle sweat through the nose.

The Herefords were well-adapted to the Carson Valley when you brought them out here? Was there any noticeable difference between them and the shorthorns and other cattle in terms of hardiness?

I always liked them because they didn't come around waiting at the fence to be fed. Hereford cattle drift; they go on out. They'll come back if there's no feed out there, but they always impressed me. It's a matter of fact

that they are better grazers, and I like their disposition and their conformation.

I've watched cattle killed, and saw how they check the grading. Cattle at a grade have a certain amount of marbling that's prescribed by a book, and administered by the judgment of the people that do the grading in the packinghouses. You have to grade them after they're dead. They do what you call rib them. The animal is hanging by the hind leg, half of the animal up one side and then the other—a side of beef—that means the front and hind quarters together. When they grade them, they take a knife and cut into a certain rib. They leave 3 ribs on the hind quarter. You cut in there, and the marbling'll show. That's what you call grading.

And you were always pleased with the grading that the Herefords gave you.

Our cattle that we produced were finished in a commercial feedlot by a packer where we used to take our cattle and finish them, put them through his packinghouse, sell the meat and pay us after he got everything done—we had that scheme. It worked very well.

Louis Isola had a packinghouse in Yerington. He came here as an Italian immigrant with \$35 in his pocket, and he sold a \$4 million packing plant when he retired. It shows what you can do in the United States if you work and believe in the private enterprise system.

Your father apparently decided that he wanted to pursue a political career around 1918. Is that correct?

No. He never did decide on a political career. He took politics on in addition to his ranching, and spent some time with politics

to render a service to his fellow man and try to control taxes. He was interested in taxes. Taxes can ruin any business, and it was necessary, he felt, that he could render a service.

I don't think he ever intended to stay in the legislature as long as he did. But after he got in, just like a lot of politicians, you get interested. Certain bills come up, and you work on it and it appears that that piece of legislation ought to be pursued in the next session; you don't finish it. It just leads you on and on. My father, as an individual, never professed or intended to enter into a political career. He wasn't cut out for it. Whatever service he rendered in a political way was just in addition to his own personal affairs.

I'm trying to determine, though, who was making the decisions concerning the composition of the herd at that time. Was it your father's idea to go ahead and upgrade them with Herefords, or was that your idea?

His serving in the legislature never put him out of contact with his business, because he'd be home on the weekend or we'd have an agreement on what direction we were going to take in the operation. I ran this Carson Valley section, and my brother-in-law, Norman Brown, ended up running the Smith Valley section. We took care of certain segments. For instance, the weaner calves were all fed over at Smith Valley.

What's a weaner calf?

A weaner calf is a calf that has to be taken off his mother. He's got to be 6 months old. After they're pulled off their mothers they're put in separate corrals and separate pens and given extra feed so that they continue to

gain in weight. This country is cold, and you have to have the proper feed and digestible nutrients.

And you found that they did better in Smith Valley?

Yes. They'd do better over there because there were less storm, less bad weather. My dad's property over there was more productive for producing alfalfa hay which was used to feed the calves.

So this was a joint decision, then, on the part of your father and yourself and Norman Brown to begin upgrading the herd?

That's right. My dad knew what both of us were going to do. We were following the direction of decisions made by my dad. In other words, I'd make this outfit function to fit...if it was wintertime, why, I'd start in and get ready for the winter—provide and keep so many cattle here with the amount of hay that was here available, run the cook house and take care of things that needed to be done.

To run a ranch, you've got to be a timekeeper and a check writer and a troubleshooter; and men get sick, you get the doctor and take people to the hospital—people get injured. Got to be somebody around here to move, so you're fluid. That's what I served after I got out of high school. I came out of high school when I was 20 and when I was 22 I was married, and after I was married I put my whole time in. In fact, soon after high school I was attached to the ranch.

You told me earlier on that your father had bought for you a herd of 20 Herefords altogether in 1919. Now I assume that those were your personal cattle.

That's right.

And you ran them on your father's range? Is that the idea?

That's right.

What kind of a business relationship did you have with your father?

We didn't have any set pattern. I kept the females, and the bulls from the herd were used by the ranch. We had no bookkeeping; we just ran it.

Did that personal herd of yours continue to grow?

Yes, they grew to that 400 head.

You had 400 head at the time of your father's death?

Yes.

About how many cattle was he grazing at that time?

With our combined outfit, at the time, there were about 3,000.

That's 1946. See if you can give me some idea of the total growth of the herd in the period from the time your father bought the Smith Valley ranch, because I guess that's the opportunity to expand the herd.

Well, there was a herd there already. He didn't buy the ranch and expand the cattle; there were cattle on it. It was a sizable herd of cattle. At the time he bought it, we cut the left ear off and branded them on the left side with a cross-S. After he bought the herd

out, he quit cutting one ear off and branding with a cross-S; put his own brand on, the D brand.

What was the cross-S? What brand was that?

That was the Plymouth Company, a Washington-based corporation that owned dairies. They didn't own anything but dairies in Smith Valley; they owned a creamery, dairy, pigs, land, hay and grain. [laughter]

My dad was in partners with 2 other men, a banker in Reno and a friend of the banker—a man by the name of Richard Kirman. He was the biggest stockholder and practically owned the Farmers and Merchants National Bank in Reno. Charlie Louis was one of the partners, and he was kind of a manager. My dad had his hands full with the ranch he had here, and then he spent time over there. I'd fit in, do what he told me.

Did the business relationship that existed between you and your father remain the same during that entire 27 years between 1919 and his death? Did you continue to graze your cattle on what was his land, and keep only the cows and give him the bulls? Is that the way it worked? Did you have any land of your own at that time?

Yes. In the meantime I bought some land. I got some land down here that I bought, a piece here and a piece there. I never did keep separate books or anything; it just became part of the outfit, and just went on like that.

Did any of your brothers or your sister have the same sort of arrangement?

My brother-in-law and my sister came into the ranch over there, but my dad paid him a salary. He was paying me a salary, too.

How did he determine that salary? Was it a percentage of the profits, or straight salary?

No, I've forgotten what it is. It wasn't too much. [laughter]

Meanwhile, where were you and Anna living?

Right here. She came to live with me before my parents and my family moved out of here, and lived here about 2 years. We had our room and lived right among the rest of them.

Then your mom and the rest of the kids moved out.

The kids needed to go to college, and she saw fit to go and be with them in California. Her health and her age was against her being here actively participating in the work and the responsibility; she was getting to where she couldn't stand that any more.

So this has been your house all of your life, hasn't it?

Yes.

Another important feature to the Dressler operation is this concept of raising your cattle from breeding until the point where they're killed. I understand that that's not common practice. Can you describe for me that process, tell me its origins and perhaps tell me what advantage it's given the Dressler ranch and the Dressler family over the years?

This raising a calf from birth to the packinghouse is not original and is not exclusive to the Dressler outfit. We probably are the ones that had the tightest arrangement and that adhered to the program tighter than

most people, because we had a very good relation with Louis Isola. We had confidence in him. He was a man with extreme honesty; you could bank on him; we knew it.

In handling this thing the way we did, it was an advantage because we didn't have to hunt somebody to buy our cattle. We took care of the cows, and during the calving time, they were marked and put on pasture. From there we'd take them to the high mountain ranges. We'd bring them back out of the high mountain ranges and wean the calves and put them on feed in my dad's operation in Smith Valley, where he had artesian water that was warm in the winter. That was a big advantage in feeding cattle. This had the advantage of having the alfalfa production over there. So we concentrated the young animals over there. After several years, we developed a relationship between us and Mr. Isola, he having come over here when we would sell him steers off of grass. My brother-in-law decided that we should have a feed mill; this is what precipitated it.

About when was that?

The early 1940s and the late 1930s. We'd get these ideas to make the thing function better. In the case of my brother-in-law it was advantageous to get this hay ground, so that it'd be consumed and not trampled in the mud. An animal can fill up much sooner with a capacity to satisfy his appetite with ground feed than he can with chewing the stems, nibbling on the tips and wasting some of it—pulling it out and trampling it. So they had a feed mill built. We found these animals, during the same period of time, on chopped hay would gain more weight. Having been fed whole hay, we turned them out on pasture and they'd gain rapidly and do well. That's when my dad developed a relationship with Mr. Isola.

He'd come over here and buy these cattle and take them over there in his packinghouse, kill them and pay for them after they were killed. To begin with, he'd pay outright when he took them, weighed them. Then we found out that these cattle being fed chopped hay all winter would gain tremendously more. With the gain that they came over here from Smith Valley with, they'd shrink and lose some of it before their body would adjust to the green grass.

So, instead of bringing them over here and letting them shrink and then pick up, we'd go right straight to Mr. Isola's packinghouse where he had a feedlot and where he could watch them and where he had the ability to mix some grain and give them a more concentrated ration, and never let them lose development. They'd continue on an upward developing stage. They would go to market sooner, and they would grade better, and they were a more desirable piece of meat.

On account of his extreme honesty, we didn't worry; we didn't have to hunt a buyer. He would do what he called a test kill. He'd go in the feedlot, if he thought there was enough of them in there to kill, and they'd grade. What inspired it was the army's demands to get a continuous, consistent quality of beef. They spread it out to the public.

When he would make a test kill, he could judge by the number of cattle that were in that corral whether he could go and get some more. As time went on, it gave him judgment of observation of the animal. People develop an eye for things. You don't all go by measurement; it's judgment. That's what Mr. Isola was able to do, and he had a ready market. He had people that were using him for a source of supply.

The United States Army, we're talking about here?

No, just ordinary people—Los Angeles, Sacramento. Reno, whatever. He knew that he had an outlet, and we never got concerned about whether we'd get our money this week or next week. We waited till he got them done. When he got it all finished, he'd give us the check. It afforded him without having to put an investment in our cattle and hold it and borrow money. We were making more money that way than if we would have been out here trying to sell cattle. Louis didn't lose any money. He had the cattle right there, and it made a smooth operation. We enjoyed that until he sold his packing plant.

That worked very successfully between us. I don't recommend that as a general practice because there's loopholes in it. You got to have an honest man, and you got to have confidence in the man. We had that relationship; we enjoyed it. Mr. Isola was the front man, and he had a partner who was equally as honest. He's still living in Yerington; that's Ralph Marconi.

Now what part of the operation did Ralph Marconi handle?

Ralph Marconi took care of the packinghouse and the shipping, and looked over the boilers and the corrals and things like that. Louis Isola took the lead in sales and buying cattle and all. But they both had a full knowledge and consulted each other. That was their way of operating as partners. It was their integrity and their honesty that we had confidence in.

To begin with, we attributed a lot of it to the breeder. We found out over the years that well-bred cattle would gain faster and grade sooner and would be in compliance with the grading system better, and had the required marbling and texture of the flesh if you'd adhere to a certain breed. The Hereford

breed was one of them, and it was careful observation, and testing, and feeding the ration and handling these cattle.

One of the things was to never let an animal sag in his development. Keep them going; always have them well fed. There are lots of cattle after they're weaned, they shrink; they get thin. The body adjusts different, or bone structure changes. If you feed cattle and keep the balanced ration as near as you can so that their continuous development occurs all the way through life, we found that was one of the reasons why the cattle graded as well as they did. Other people who followed near to what we did realized the same thing.

Mr. Isola has been on record as saying that your cattle graded consistently higher than those from other ranches who were supplying him. The figure was 58 to 62 percent, wasn't it?

Somewhere along in there. It could've been 64 or something like that.

* * * * *

What does a buckaroo do? What do you know about the derivation of that term?

The term "buckaroo" originated from the Spanish word vaquero. Vaquero means a man that takes care of cattle. It sounded like "buckaroo," so they used the term "buckaroo."

I understand that here in Nevada they're called buckaroos rather than cowboys. Is that correct?

Well, you hear both terms. Some people say cowboy; it isn't a general hard and fast name. I've been called a buckaroo and a cowboy and various things myself. But the duties, like the original Spanish word vaquero,

that's tending cattle. The basis is that that cow has feed and water, so she can exist.

In this area, we keep the cattle down in the lower meadow; we start with the springtime. They're down on the meadows about ready to be turned out, finish the hay which had been prepared in the summer before. These cattle are about ready to turn out and then shorten up the hay, because the snow's gone off and melted and the grass is starting to grow to some extent. They're getting some grazing on the area that was under snow while they were fed nothing but hay being hauled to them, in some instances with sleds, but where I live it was all wagons. We never fed with sleds here because the snow wasn't deep enough and it didn't last long enough; it wasn't necessary.

The buckaroo was the man that threw the hay out and he watched the cattle. A lot of the buckaros helped feed. Some of them didn't; some of them'd lay off during the winter and break horses or do other odd jobs. But generally speaking, in this area the buckaroo duties were partly feeding hay.

When the grass is starting to grow and we're tapering off the hay where the grazing is available, they move them off the meadows so they can start irrigating and drag the meadows and scatter the manure and get ready for the new crop of hay. In these instances, the buckaroo becomes an irrigator to start with, and rides out among the cattle and turns the water and watches them, see if the cow's in trouble calving. If she is, he takes care of it.

After the cattle go to the mountains, he's full-time staying in the mountains with his camp and watching and moving the cattle from place to place on the U.S. Forest grazing area. We own private land, and we use our private land and forest land together as a unit. There's a determination and a study made

that the carrying capacity of my private land is a certain number. The private carrying capacity of the federal land is a number. So the cattle are run there, and the man that owns the land—like it'd be with me—they'll give me credit for so many cattle running on my own land and a charge of so much a head for the cattle, the numbers that are estimated to run and use the forest. But they all run in common, and the cattle are moved from place to place as you see fit.

After the height of the mountains has been reached and mid-summer tapers off down into the fall, [theft gather them up and take them back down onto the meadow where you cut the hay. The hay in the meantime has been cut and stacked or baled and piled and fenced. When the snows come, we start all over again throwing hay out. That's the rotation or cycle. In the meantime, the buckaroo is taking care of the cows if they calved and assist in the branding and marking. It used to be that it was all done on horseback—roping and dragging them to the fire. Now a lot of this branding and marking is done with chutes—calf table. I like calf table because it don't work me so hard; I don't even have to stoop down and do the castrating and marking and it's cleaner.

You did some buckarooring when you were younger. Can you tell me something about that period in your life?

Another phase of the buckaroo—you had to break your horses. You had to be able to ride a bucking horse.

You had to break your own horses?

Yes. if you weren't able, didn't have the time, sometimes we'd hire a man that was professed to be a horse breaker. He'd take the

green colts and work them and get them what you call started, get them so that they'd mind the bit and would get over this idea of bucking every time you get on him. I've done that part of it myself, too.

When did you start doing that?

When I was about 14, going to grammar school, and then on through high school. As I grew older I continued to do it, breaking horses when I had to or getting a started horse and finish him...ride them if they bucked.

How many horses would a buckaroo need back in the 1920s?

It would depend. There are lots of places where the buckaroo never saw a shovel like I'm telling you about. He stayed right out on the range and rode the range in bunches. They had a wagon and a cook, and there'd be 8 or 10 men out there with a boss. One fellow would be delegated to be the wrangle boy, and there'd be a cook. The other fellows would ride the range.

During the season when they were branding and marking, they'd go to areas and round up a bunch of cattle and hold them in a circle and brand and mark the calves. I think that's still done in parts of Texas. That's where the buckaroo name came in, when he stayed right out there on the range.

In this particular area that I grew up in, you got a sample of a buckaroo when you watched your cattle out in the meadow, and you had to be the irrigator and maybe the boss and direct the hay crew and incidentally break workhorses.

To hitch up workhorses, you used to break them in a cart—take a green colt and tie the tongue of the cart to a hitching post with a

chain and a snap, and bring a gentle horse in on one side and then bring the colt in on the other and tie him to the gentle horse.

The helper'd unfasten the tongue and then sometimes help hook up the tugs, and this cart had a brake on it, and you'd get in and take off. The colt would rear and jerk and jump and try to get away, but the old horse would hold him. Finally you could guide them the way you wanted to by the action of the old horse; he'd crowd him one way or the other or pull him around. That's how these young horses were started in this country. That term buckaroo covered a lot of that.

What about the kind of clothing that buckaroos wore? Has that changed any in the last 60 years or so since you first got started?

No, but the garb that served the most would be Levi Strauss overalls and a shortcut jumper. They used those jumpers because when they'd swing the rope the jumper wouldn't get wrapped around. If you had a long jumper, it would wrap around the horn of the saddle, so when you wanted to dally you'd get your rope and your jumper tied up, maybe your finger caught in the meantime.

What about chaps? Most of the guys I see riding around today don't wear chaps of the kind that I remember having seen pictures of.

Well, they've changed that. The old original fellows that I grew up with, it was customary to wear angora chaps. They were either white or black, generally. When I was a kid, I saw some fellow with spots, so I had the chaps made with spots on, dyed a different color. I've got a pair of chaps right now, black with orange spots. The orange spots are tufts of angora skin mixed in with the black.

Those were regular working chaps and not for special occasions or anything?

Yes, they helped shed the water, and you could ride through the brush and protect your legs. A lot of the people used to have leather chaps, even in the early days—just plain leather chaps with a fringe down the side. They protected you in the brush and down in the desert and help you sit on a horse when he was bucking.

What about the equipment that a buckaroo would carry; has any of that changed over the years?

The old-timers used to have rawhide lariats. They knew how to handle them. Most of it was done with roping calves for branding. You could rope a cow or a big animal, but you wouldn't want to tie on hard and fast and rope onto one of those big animals or you'd snap your lariat. You'd have what's called a dally, and they'd rope—take some turns and follow the animal to slow him down—but don't let him run out on the end of the rope and jerk it.

So that's changed a little bit; people don't carry lariats anymore?

The people that knew how to make them are nonexistent any more. Today's cowboy, he's got several ropes. They have their special type of rope, and most of them are nylon ropes. They're very carefully taken care of and coiled up nice and even and handled very carefully. Some of those kind of ropes the boys out in the field will carry.

When did you first begin going on cattle drives and things like that?

I first went on a cattle drive when my father took me out; I was 8 years old, moving the cattle off of the meadows and down in the valley where they'd been kept for the winter.

You didn't have your own horse at that time, did you?

Yes, I did.

Were you actually involved in the work?

Yes. I was ready to be told what to do.

Was there ever a period of time when you worked as a buckaroo almost exclusively for your father's ranch?

No, it was intermittent. You had to be a buckaroo; if you wanted to be a special buckaroo, you'd run out of work on this country.

I'd like you to put together some memories of some of the more rigorous cattle drives that you were involved in, so you can give me an illustration of what life as a buckaroo was like.

That's another sample of what a buckaroo has to do in movement of cattle. The drive that I helped on was a drive of cattle that belonged to my father and neighbors. They put the herd together and made a large herd of other people's cattle and my dad's cattle, and neighbors go along. So there was 8 or 10 or a dozen fellows on the drive.

Would that happen every year, that kind of pooling?

It did happen every year when my father was operating and before trucking came into being.

My dad used to sell cattle to packers in Los Angeles. After Los Angeles got growing and got to be a big center, there was a demand for cattle and they had a lot of packinghouses. There was a place called Vernon Avenue—that was packers' avenue. There were some packers down there that my dad did business with.

They made drives out of Bridgeport in the fall, start in about the first week of September. It would take us about 4 or 5 days to get down to the railroad where we'd finish loading and getting them on their way to Los Angeles by rail.

We'd leave Bridgeport from the Point ranch, and drive them up over the mountain into the Mono Lake Basin to Goat ranch. The next day we'd spend all day and all night on our way over the mountains. My dad had arrangements with a rancher; [we'd] put the cattle on pasture overnight until the next day at about noon. Then we'd continue down through to Benton. We'd stop at Dutch Pete's, and then we'd go to Benton Station. They'd take them down through there and put them on the Taylor ranch down below Benton for a couple of days. We'd herd them there in the meadow, and then get them ready and order the cars. They were loaded on narrow-gauge cars. The cars looked like a small railroad flatcar with panels on it, without a roof on. They were loaded on them at Benton and shipped down to Keeler and transferred to broad-gauge cars, and from then right on into Los Angeles.

I happened to be on one, and my dad had ordered some water to be put in the corral at Benton. They were late getting it in there, and the cattle had already been put in the corral. My dad expected the water to have been delivered and put in the troughs before the cattle got there. When they came it was dark, and the engine pulled up with the water car

alongside the corral to dispatch the water into the troughs. He pulled a valve that released the steam out of the side of the piston, then down the side of the engine. When he did that the cattle vanished out of the corral. We had cattle scattered all over the flat down there between Benton Station and the Taylor ranch. Took till the next day to gather them up. We delayed the shipment, and finally got them gathered together. But that's just one of the experiences you run into and things that happen when you're driving cattle.

Once they put the cattle on the train were you required to accompany them all the way into Los Angeles?

Yes, my dad went with them. They'd ship them.

You said you took them off a narrow gauge and onto a regular one. Who was responsible for that?

The buckaroos.

So you had to go along and do it.

You had to go along and be there. The railroad crew would pull them up to the chute, and you'd have to open the door and let them out. Some of the conductors and the brakemen would lend a hand, but it wasn't their job. The railroad crews were boys that were raised on a ranch. So they all had a background.

Did you enjoy cattle drives like that? Did you like being a buckaroo?

Yes, I liked it. It was just the idea of driving these cattle and moving them along, riding horseback, cooking out in the open. We had

a special guy along with us on those trips that would do the cooking.

When you'd stop for lunch, he'd open up the camp outfit and probably had a stew and beans prepared that he could warm up quickly over an open tire. Everybody'd get a plate, help himself and go and sit on a brush or sit down around the shade of a tree if there was one. Out there in Benton there wasn't too many trees right close. [laughter] On the road you didn't wash your hands; you'd brush the dust oft, and blink your eyes a little bit and let the dust fall out of them—go ahead and eat.

Now what would happen at night with the cattle? You always had a place to come in?

Yes, we always had an enclosure. We never turned them loose. I have accompanied trips and drives with cattle where you had to night herd, keep the fellows up all night, and you rotate. You had to ride herd because the cattle would wander off at night, especially in the moonlight, and especially if they're thirsty. I remember one trip I was on where we had 24 hours on the way between water. We had water along in barrels and cans for the horses and our camp. But the cattle didn't get any drink from the time they left in the morning until the next day at noon.

That must be tough on the cattle.

It didn't hurt them any, but they were thirsty. When they could smell water they took off, went down the canyon and piled into the river.

Once you had loaded the cattle onto the train to go off to Los Angeles, you and the other buckaroos turned around and rode back here to...?

We'd ride back to the headquarters in Bridgeport. From there we'd go home. People'd be borrowed; neighbors would go along and accompany the drive. We'd pool our effort, and everybody would go back home.

How much more profit were you able to realize by doing that?

It was a handier, more practical way of moving them: if you drive them over and load them on the railroad and ship them to Los Angeles. We drove overland; we weren't involved in any developed roads.

For a period of time we owned a ranch down in California. After we'd bought that we drove cattle across the Sierras for 8 years, from about 1942 till 1950. We'd follow the highway. In the fall of the year, we'd figure out about how many bales of hay it would take to feed the cattle each night; we'd take the hay in trucks ahead of time, maybe as far ahead as 3 weeks or a month—nobody would disturb it. We'd spread it out in the corral and leave the wires tied.

Our route went over Highway 50 the first year. We had stations that we stopped at, and every one of them hay was hauled to. After that, the route was over the Carson Pass, Highway 88. We'd take hay the first night to Hope Valley, and next night to Kirkwood, the next night to Tragedy Springs, and the next night to Lumberyard, and the next night to Burke's, and the next night to Bedbug and stay there 2 nights and then go down through the back way into Amador City where we had land leased. We owned land in El Dorado County and leased land in Amador County at that time. We practiced that for 8 years.

We used to leave here about October 18, and it'd take us 7 to 8 days before we'd reach the other end. It was on one of those trips we hit a rough snowstorm. About 14 to 16 inches

of snow fell during the night that we camped on the Silver Lake summit at Tragedy Spring. The wind blew and knocked a tree down and hit an animal and crippled it, broke its back. We gave it to a man that had a resort at the Tragedy Springs where we stayed. He kept his resort open every year until we'd come by. We had to be cautious and figure out a way to get the trucks out of there. We had all our hay and horse feed, beds for about 10 men along and all our camp and food stuff. We just let the cattle out, and I had the boys keep the cattle bunched up to keep them right on the paved road and smash the snow down. They tramped the snow down and made it possible for us to get out of there.

The first day out of Tragedy, we went down to Lumberyard and there was less snow. We were in snow all day the next day and part of the third day, but we managed.

Did you then sell the land in California?

I sold the land. We then proceeded to lease for a while, and then finally it dwindled down to where I don't take very many cattle over there any more.

Now they all get trucked over?

Yes. After they improved the road over the Echo Summit, you could go to Carson City up over Spooner and over Echo and down that way—that's the way we went for a while. Before that we went clear over Donner down to east Sacramento and across toward Folsom, and then back up into Amador County to unload in the area that we had near Jackson.

This is by truck, isn't it?

That's right. Then they improved the road over the Carson Pass, and that further enabled

us to cut our route and the shipping costs down. It don't make any difference what the distance is; the cost is becoming prohibitive and we're in quandary right now in the cow business to know which way to go. We've been in all these years, and we have to find a way to get out. It's pretty hard to get out and change your mind [after] you have spent your life and 3 generations in an enterprise. The cow business isn't paying today.

Have you made the decision to get out of it then?

It's making an urge. The urge is that what are you going to do? I can't make it go. What's the next move? You've got to figure it out; I haven't made the complete decision. I don't think I'm going to get clear out, but I might have to trim my wings, so to speak.

You were telling me about how much you enjoyed being a buckaroo.

I enjoyed all of it ever since I was a boy. It's a way of life, and I like things that are rugged; I like things that got action. I like to do things that I can get control of. I like to project and move in and accomplish something.

For instance, I watched my dad and helped him go from leveling land with Fresno scrapers to leveling land with Caterpillars. When Caterpillars came out, he bought one of the first ones. Then we went from the horse mower to tractor mowers, and from individual mowers on a side of a tractor to swathers. Now they have air-conditioned swathers, and one man with one swather can do the work that I used to have to get 7 or 8 men to do with about 16, 20 head of horses.

It's been interesting, and the world has been open to me. I've enjoyed it because

when the day opens up I was ready to go, and when it closed I was tired and went to bed. In lots of ways that kind of takes in some of the philosophy and some of the attitude I had. Be ready to take on the next day.

After you get in, it becomes a part of your way of life. Sometimes they're [cattle] not the easiest to handle. They'll attack you, attack your horse. If you don't know how to handle your horse, you might get throwed. I was attacked by a bull one time, and the bull picked me up, horse and all, and carried me for about 50 feet. I thought he was going to pick the horse up and throw him up in the air upside down on top of me.

Over time you can relate back and see some of the hazards and some of the close escapes you had. I used to drive a mowing machine when I was a kid and had to help with the haying. One time I ran into a bunch of cans. We used to run sheep, and the sheepherders had these milk cans on a wire and they used them for a rattle. The sickle ran into this cluster of cans.

When you drive a mowing machine, it rattles and it's got a monotone to it. But the minute you change that sound suddenly, workhorses with blinkers on take off. This one instance they took off—me and the mowing machine and the team—in a flying leap and we were on our way. They ran about a quarter mile straight up; I was able to keep them running straight, but they were throwing dirt in my face and I had my hands on the lines and my feet on the axle of the mowing machine.

How old were you when that happened?

I was about 16.

Can tell me something about the development of your role as manager of the ranch operations?

I had a big hand in managing, but more or less piecemeal. After I got married, my dad made it a pattern; I had to be responsible, and I had to be into something. So I was prepared and ready to get in as manager.

I followed his policies and the general direction of plans. All of his life he was in debt, and he had plans on how to pay for what he had bought and what he had contracted to buy. Those were the kind of direction that I had to help him take. It wasn't long before he passed away that the debts were paid, and then we were immediately thrust right back in debt owing the government inheritance tax. My family were sensible people. My brother-in-law and I were the active operators, and we stuck together; we used one attorney and had meetings and paid the inheritance tax off.

My mother sold some pieces of property to me. Due to the fact I've stayed here all my life, my father and mother set me up and put me in gear in this ranch. I worked it out, and my wife and I bought some properties.

I feel satisfied with what I've done over my life. I followed my father's initiative, followed his direction, and helped him accomplish some of the things he did and made the basis for me to carry on as far as I've gone. I can't see the end of the trail when I look back because it's too far back. I don't know what the trail ahead of me is because that's a day-by-day approach. I'm going to use the days that open to me, and I'm going to keep going as far as I can.

I understand that about 1929 or 1930 you secured an appointment in the Carson Valley as a livestock loan inspector. Can you tell me something about that?

I took the appointment from a man by the name of Bob Turritin; he had charge of the loans in this part of the country. Mr. Turritin's

office was in Reno. He had different livestock loan inspectors. I was given the area of Mason Valley, Smith Valley and Carson Valley. The first inspections I worked on were with Mason Valley. I was asked to go over and visit the ranches who had made application for loan. Mr. Turritin would send the names out, and I'd go over and interview the people and count their livestock.

In order to have the loan, they had to put up whatever security they had and they used the livestock as a collateral. It became necessary to inventory the livestock, classify them and value them. I'd go out and inventory the livestock and bring them into an office in Yerington—the county agent's office—and he and I'd sit up way into the night making out these reports and sending them in. I must have sent in 25 or 30 applications. I got as high as counting 6,000-7,000 sheep out in the hills or maybe 1,200-1,300 head of cattle out on a range. Those are larger outfits that were applying for loans.

The thing was widespread; it had an effect on stymieing movement of livestock industries in this country. There were instances where people couldn't get money for their livestock—couldn't sell it.

I remember my father losing 2 years' clip of wool. It went so far that they sent some of it to Boston, and other people sent wool to Boston to get it close to the market. They never got anything but a bill for storage for some of their wool. These are incidentals that took place and had to be overcome and losses that were sustained by people. It put a crimp in you and retarded your progress of getting out of debt. Most agricultural enterprises were always in debt.

Which one of the valleys do you think was hit hardest by the Depression?

The hardest hit was Mason Valley. There were 2 banks over there, and they both went broke and closed. That little community depended on those banks. A lot of those people were borrowers as well as depositors in the banks. It just put the thing in a standstill. Merchants couldn't be paid for their goods, and people would come in and buy groceries. The merchants were financing the community there for a while. That sort of a situation was created by the Depression.

Then the reconstruction finance came about by the government backing up these loans. The government provided a system of getting money available through government backing. Then they organized livestock production credit associations, federal land bank associations for long-term loans at a rate of interest people could pay.

The Dangberg people were hard hit; they were going good and they were hit. It set them back for years. They were in debt for 10 or 15 years. If the thing hadn't happened, they'd have probably had money in the bank and going on in a greater degree of prosperity.

What kind of an effect did the Depression have on the Dressler ranch?

About the same effect. My dad was able to borrow money. He was borrowing money from different banks, and they were able to loan him the money. It would seem to me that our debts were so big and so heavy that nobody wanted the debts, so they didn't come in and take us over. Our resources weren't readily saleable. If somebody were ready to buy you, your debtors will sell you out. We were in a position one time where nobody wanted to buy us out because you couldn't make it. [laughter]

Considering the scarcity of money there probably weren't many improvements in the operation of this ranch during the 1930s. Is that a reasonably accurate assessment?

We carried on. Instead of going out and buying a new tractor, we probably hitched up some horses or we'd go down and buy some parts and repair the old one.

Did you continue to employ about the same number of men?

No, we cut some out, but the help were willing to take less money for their labor.

Some sheep outfits, they couldn't pay the herders for 2 or 3 years. The herders stayed right on. In some instances, they were paid with sheep after things got going. There was a great loyalty among some of these people who used to work on these farms and ranches.

Were there any other ways in which the people here in the Carson Valley helped one another during the Depression that you can remember?

There was no kind of an organization that could be formed to help because it was a money proposition.

For most of the country, the Second World War more or less pulled the nation out of the Depression. What effect did the coming of the Second World War have on the Dressler ranch? When did you first begin to notice that you were no longer in a depression?

It was so gradual; there was no sudden pull out. The Second World War didn't get agriculture out of depression. It might have got the people that were manufacturing war material and the explosives and transportation...it stimulated

transportation. But as far as stimulating and getting agriculture out of the Depression, it didn't have any great effect because it stabilized prices. Every time after a war, we'd get it in the neck. We're getting it there now.

The war stimulated market. I don't say that it put us in depression, during the war prices of cattle went up and they brought more money. But there was a cost factor, too, that went into a lot of these things.

The government sent money to Italy after the war was over; my brother was one of the men sent over there by the government. I had a brother who was in the military. He was with the quartermaster. He was sent over to Italy during the administration of food after the war stopped because they had a terrible situation for distribution of food. These things happened.

Of course, we had our troubles here, too. We didn't have everything available, and we had to skimp on various things. I remember we needed a pickup, and it took about over a year to get this pickup. We had to get it on a quota; things were placed on a quota. If you needed rubber boots to irrigate with, you had to go to the rationing board; they had rationing boards for many things. The costs of everything we did went up.

Packinghouses were more or less put under government supervision. They were under control. They had a price control on, too. There was a price control on beef.

Your family had always employed a lot of Washo Indians here on the ranch. Did you continue to employ them through the Second World War?

We employed them as they were available.

I'm curious as to whether the war had any effect on the availability of manpower for agriculture.

A lot of those Indians were taken right off these farms and put in the army. Some were taken right off this ranch. They were drafted.

Would any agents of the government come and physically get the Indians to put them in the army?

No, they were all notified. The county had their draft boards, and these people who were under the draft age were all notified and reported every so often. When they got ready to ship, they'd notify certain ones that'd be shipped. These people would be notified to appear just as though they belonged to the army. They'd appear and be sent in for indoctrination into the services.

Was your ranch able to get all the manpower it needed during the war?

No. We were shorthanded lots of time.

How did you compensate for that?

During the summertime was the worst when we needed help to harvest the hay and get the crops in. We'd get high school kids. One time we shipped in a whole Greyhound bus load of kids out of Riverside County High School.

California?

Yes. I got a contact from a man to get these boys out of high school, bring them here and teach them and have them tear things up. But they stayed long enough to learn, so we tolerated it. We had some great experiences—tip the wagons over and teams run away.

One time there was 2 boys driving a bale wagon, and I'd taken my time to show them

how to hitch these horses up. We had to give them gentle horses, and we had a system at that time where we had these little wagons and 2 horses. These kids went out to hitch up the team.

Well, these kids didn't pay strict attention to what I'd showed them. They apparently didn't hook up the cross checks, and they didn't hook up the tugs like they should and they started the team out. They had one tug hooked on one horse and one tug hooked on another horse and the cross checks weren't hooked, so one went right and one went left. They had enough tugs hooked up so it drew the wagon, and it frightened the team and they took off. They ran the tongue through a little hen house, one went one side of the hen house, and one went the other and stopped there. I came along and straightened that out. That's how things went. They would tip things over and break up machinery, but we got along.

Where were these kids housed?

We had bunkhouses here. The bunkhouse is still here. It's not used as extensively. We used to run a cook house here. We don't do that any more.

Can you spend some time talking about the reconstruction of the Dressler ranch and about the period of the 1950s, and tell me the effect that it might have had on the family and on the ranching enterprise here?

At no time did the war have a sudden lurch or jerk; it was gradual. We didn't go through any sudden changes, and I didn't have to reorganize the ranch because the ranch was never disorganized at any time either through the First World War or the Second World War. The tendency was to go a certain

way, and then when these things overcame and changed back we availed ourselves of the advantages that we were able to take. But in the instances where the government needed the money, they needed the food, they needed the effort, they more or less arranged to take it and we participated and complied with the government regulations the best we could.

You had produced 1.5 million pounds per year.

A million, five hundred thousand pounds of finished fed beef a year.

During the Second World War?

Yes. That was our production.

Is that the highest level of production your ranch had ever achieved?

We never kept track; I don't know. I remember that because it was a requirement that you put in for a deferment if you had people....I had other kids deferred. One of them I had deferred, they finally took him over to Philippines and in the last 30 days of the war killed him over there. I don't think they should've done it, send these green kids in there.

What sort of a situation did you face after your father's death when you took over the ownership of the home ranch?

After Father's death in 1946—September 12, 1946—we continued to operate the property in the same manner of which he had outlined, and the properties were divided up according to his plan during his lifetime and completed during my mother's lifetime before she passed away.

I understand that later on you and your wife then acquired more property in California and in the surrounding area around the Dressler ranch.

Some of that property was acquired before and during the period of time helping my dad operate his place as separate.

Is this ranch, as it exists today, any larger than it was prior to the time that your father passed away? Have you increased the holdings?

We've increased to some extent, probably on the south end of the ranch in Alpine County; there's been some purchases made since my father's and mother's passing.

It would appear that the 1950s was a pretty good time, a prosperous time for agriculture in general. Did you find that that was so here in the Carson Valley? What was the period of the 1950s like for the Dressler ranch?

We participated in the advantages that these prices offered. They were good for a while. It seemed that they commenced to decline after 1952 when they commenced to import meat from Australia. That had a depressing effect. Since that time, the cattle prices have been up and down. In all these years, costs have entered into it. Borrowed monies cost more money, machinery costs more money, labor costs more money and gasoline costs a lot more money. Automobiles have trebled in value and cost; trucks have quadrupled in cost. So here we are. We're doing the best we can with what we've got to do with. But it's certainly not going to maintain itself in the economic direction it's going. Changes are going to have to take place.

I understand that your father was somewhat advanced, progressive, when it came to the use of mechanized equipment. In fact, you told me that he had one of the first steam shovels in this area, brought it in here in 1909. Did he introduce any other kind of equipment that was not drawn by horses or powered by wind or anything else prior to that?

There wasn't any machinery that we could use outside of an automobile that wasn't drawn by horses. I think Dad was the first one to bring a manure spreader in here. Customarily they'd take it out in dump carts, or stand on the wagon and scatter it with a manure fork. They used to take it out and dump it in rows and piles. Then 2 or 3 men'd take the manure forks and scatter the manure from the piles—the piles were placed so that they'd be able to throw the manure. Then Dad got what they called a Galloway manure spreader. It was made in Waterloo, Iowa, and he had that shipped out here. It was machinery and the beater and everything was put on wagon wheels and axle. It was mounted on a regular wagon running gear. That was the first manure spreader I remember.

When did he bring that in?

About 1910, I'd say.

That reduced the number of men that were necessary to spread manure?

No, not necessarily; just got the job done faster. The manure had to be pitched onto the manure spreader the same as they did with pitching it onto a wagon or a dump cart. It eliminated going out and spreading the manure by hand which was an advantage.

Your father bought a Dorris automobile in 1908, was it?

Nineteen-ten, 1910.

Nineteen-ten. Then shortly thereafter you bought a Ford as well. What other pieces of equipment was he bringing into the ranch at about that time?

I remember, with the regular farm machinery, mowing machines—all horse drawn. Then he bought a small harvester that was pulled by a tractor.

He bought a tractor? When did he buy that?

In 1915 he bought a Holt 45. That was manufactured in Stockton, California.

Is this the first piece of gasoline-powered equipment for the ranch?

Yes, that was the first gasoline-powered tractor we had.

What kind of a change did that make in the way the ranch was operated?

He was able to get the plowing done faster, and one man could do it. My brother used to do the plowing—most of it. He was just a kid, but my dad put him on the tractor. He used to use it for various things. I remember they connected 3 wagons and they hauled posts from Markleeville over the road. A man had to go along and put the brakes on coming downhill. My brother drove the tractor.

Was there any resistance on the part of members of your family or the ranch hands to using the tractor?

No, everybody was for it. It made it better.

It may sound like a silly question to you, but I've talked with farmers who have told me about some resistance to using modern mechanized equipment. Traditions die hard sometimes; they hate to give up the horses.

My father was a little bit reluctant to have me convert from the horse mowers to tractors because it took gasoline, but it didn't take long to prove to him that it was an advantage and could get the work done quicker. Like in haying, you get the hay cut quicker and didn't have all the horses to tend to.

There was a tendency for people not to want to work on these ranches as detailedly. Apparently the manufacturing of different pieces of equipment was attracting the men to work in factories to build it rather than come out on the ranches and work with hand tools and the equipment that was available. Trucks came in and it just gradually was a regular evolution. It follows that building roads offered better wages, so you go to building roads. Trucks needed a better road, and then the crops could be more readily delivered to market instead of being hauled to a central railroad station and transferred several times by hand—loaded on the wagon, hauled to a depot and reloaded on a car, and then moved from one railroad to another. When better roads came in and trucks came in we evolved to what we have now.

Tell me about how long it took for the Dressler ranch to convert from horse-drawn equipment entirely to internal combustion-drawn equipment?

I'd say it went on for probably 15 years.

Beginning around 1915 with that Holt tractor?

Yes, it was 1915. You might attribute plowing to tractors. You could get so much more done in a shorter period of time, and get the crops in and started. This country has got a short growing season. Instead of having lots of horses and having people out there plowing intermittently during the spells of weather, you could go out there and get it done.

It wouldn't take as much preparation. You could just get out there and do it.

You had the power to do the preparing, whereas the other way you had to take longer time. You'd have to have a man out there to drag your field after you plowed them and break up the clods; you might have two 8-horse teams. You could put one man out there with a tractor and he could go twice as fast. You wouldn't have any horses to hook up; you'd be out there working while they're hitching up teams and bringing them in, feeding them and all that detail. People that knew how to handle these horses and do all that were going out of existence. These old teamsters that you used to be able to pick up that had knowledge and ability to handle lots of horses—they weren't there.

Could you wait until later in the year to do the plowing, in the knowledge that you could do all of it very quickly?

Well, you got to get it in and planted by a certain date.

Has that date changed any over the last 60 years?

No.

What time do you do the spring plowing, then?

We don't do any plowing at all any more. The farms that were here were relatively small compared to what goes on in the country. The biggest opportunity left here in agriculture is cow pasture—no plow—not necessary.

What about the grain that you raised?

That was used to supplement the dairies. You needed the grain to feed the calves which is not necessary. Then another thing, the horse has gone clear out—no more horses in agriculture. You raised oats to feed your horses, some barley. Now it isn't necessary to have it.

The only requirement for grain for horses is saddle horses, pleasure horses, race horses and such like that.. .where a horse is filling a horse's place. There is no place in agriculture, pulling any plows any more, for a horse.

Can you remember when the Dressler ranch raised its last crop of grain for horses?

I don't think we raised grain on the ranch here.

That might mark the end of the horse-drawn era of equipment?

There was always a few head of horses. We haven't gotten rid of every last horse that we used. We used to have a few left to feed with in the wintertime, but there was only 6 or 8 head.

The last team that we drove here for any use was a team of Belgians driven by a man by the name of Burt Badart that worked for us. He was a cowboy in the summertime and took care of the cattle and put the baled hay out in the wintertime, and he drove this team of Belgian horses. That must have been along in about early 1950s when that terminated. Since then, we've never used any more horses.

Can you name the most important pieces of equipment that were acquired by this ranch in terms of the changes they may have made in the operation of the ranch? What had the greatest impact?

One of the pieces of equipment had a great impact on our operation was the instituting of a feed mill where we ground the hay instead of feeding it whole. That took place right around the end of the 1930s during the time when we were all together. My brother-in-law had charge of the operation in Smith Valley where the mill was built. We still had horses cutting the hay, but it came along after the hay baler.

Another thing that displaced horses was the field balers—baled the hay right in the field and then piled it in stacks, bale piles. After it was baled it fit the feed mill. These things all took their turn and all followed in sequence.

What kind of an impact did the feed mill have?

It provided a means to get better efficiency out of the hay. We fed that ground hay to our beef cattle and to our young cattle. They'd fill up and consume more ground hay in the same time that it'd take them to eat whole hay. They didn't waste it; it was ground up so they could consume the whole portion that was fed to them with great efficiency. They put on more weight in the same length of time that we had to winter them.

How long did your family go on using the feed mill?

The feed mill is still in operation; we never quit. That's a modern way of handling feed stuff, and they've got advancements and

improvements. I don't handle that operation; my nephew handles that.

You said that the hay baler changed the whole process of haying, and it removed the need for some horses, didn't it?

It made it so that we can put up the hay with less men and all machinery. The hay is baled right in the field, picked up with a mechanical loader and wagon all in one combination. They called it Arrowbed. It was invented down there in central California. That's the kind of equipment that we have. We have one of those; it picks the bales up and loads them automatically and unloads them without the man having to get off the seat, stacks them in ricks.

I would imagine that trucks had quite an impact on the operation of this ranch. When did you get your first truck?

Must have been in the 1930s. First truck was a small one-ton truck. That was before the days of the 4wheel brakes. It served us in good stead because we were probably some of the first people to transport saddle horses to the job. We didn't have any chute; we'd back up to a ditch and jump them off or on the truck. Instead of having a nice, neat rack like they have today and everything built for a purpose, we put panels inside and wired it together and go to the mountains and then back up to a big boulder and let the horses step out of the end of the truck. That's the way we started. Now they've got what they called gooseneck trailers; they connect with a ball and socket to pickups and one-ton trucks. They're a low bed sort of thing. Everybody's using them extensively to transport saddle horses and livestock.

Tell me something about the effect that your purchase of trucks had on the movement of cattle.

The improvement of roads has given rise to the handling of the cattle through trucks. We're trucking them from the winter quarters to the summer quarters with trucks. Where it used to take us 5 days to drive a herd, in 4 to 5 hours we move the cattle from summer to winter.

When did you first start doing that?

In the late 1930s...hired trucks. Then we later bought a truck of our own around 1942. We truck all of our cattle from point to point except very few instances where we have one place where we gather them in the fall.

In one instance, we gather our cattle in the high mountains where we concentrate them in one big herd and we drive them down the Woodfords Canyon. It's a one-day drive. It's necessary to get the highway patrol involved. We have a highway patrolman stay behind and one go ahead. It's quite a novelty; we don't have any trouble getting people to help us. Neighbors and friends and people that hear about the drive want to come along, and we serve a good lunch and have a kind of a picnic out of it.

About when does that happen? What month?

About the middle of October.

We were talking earlier about the first tractor that you purchased, a 1915 Holt. Was the tractor any good?

It was good. Those were very successful equipment. Of course, they've built them

better; they've made improvements in the metal. In those days, the sole outlet was agriculture. Then this Holt Caterpillar—they called it Holt Caterpillar tractor—was built in Stockton, and they afterwards were sold out and formed a company called Caterpillar Tractor Company. Then they moved to Peoria, Illinois, where they still are and they're a worldwide outfit. They've evolved to where the Caterpillar tractor and bulldozers are the mainstay in the movement of earth for construction on highways and various other things—buildings and dams and such construction. It's gotten so that the cost of these pieces of equipment is pretty expensive for ranchers to even own any more.

Did your tractor have tracks or did it have wheels?

No, a tracklayer. They used to have big gas tractors, and back east they had Vince Rumley and Minneapolis Moline and different names that I've forgotten, but they were great huge round-wheeled tractors with grousers [steel wheels that bit into the ground] on. They were used in the wheat-growing belts, Montana, and Minnesota and Canada. Now the rubber-tired, round-wheeled tractors have taken their place.

The round wheels didn't work as well as the tracklayers out here in the valley?

The round-wheeled tractor would slip; it would dig itself in. The tracklayer had a great deal more ability to grab hold and pull. The power was exerted to the tracks, and it wouldn't slip.

Did you sell that tractor, or is it still sitting out back along with the other equipment that you've got?

No, it was dismantled, sold...junk.
[laughter]

I would imagine that milking machines had quite an impact on some of the operations here on this ranch. You were telling me that your father had gone out of the dairy business at one time. Why did he choose to do that? About what time was it?

I never was very enthusiastic about the dairy business myself, personally. We hit a situation; then what really put us out of the dairy business in the first place was the tuberculosis. When they started testing cows for tuberculosis, we found our herd infected with TB and they'd react to that. We made 2 or 3 tests, and finally periodically we got down to where it didn't pay to run the few cows and my dad sold them. He just quit.

About what time was that?

I'd say it was about the late 1920s.

Those were Holstein cattle that you had?

Well, they were mixed; they weren't a purebred. There were some shorthorn and Brown Swiss and Jerseys and crossed up; they were called the milk cows because they were a mixed kind of a setup. They're not any particular breed.

When you got out of the business, what did you do with the cows? Were they slaughtered for beef?

We had to sell them to be slaughtered.

The tuberculosis wouldn't keep you from selling it as beef, would it?

These cows didn't go around here just half-dead. They had the tuberculosis germ, and they'd react to a tuberculosis test. We could've probably been right in the state in the dairy business with that same herd until today, but they would've had the bug in their system. If it would develop and hit them in the lungs or some vital part, then they'd emaciate and the danger was through drinking milk humans could contract tuberculosis.

That was when the government made these tests and demanded that all dairy cattle be tested. Before that there were no tests, and you'd milk what come handy and that's how it went. But we got caught in the squeeze, and that's how we went out of the dairy business. It didn't hurt my feelings because I didn't like the dairy business anyway.

Why not? Because of all the milking?

It was confining, and my dad had sheep; he had range cattle and it took a lot of time. There was room for me to put all the time I had in these other things which I liked better.

He did get back into the dairy business later on, didn't he?

Yes. He went to Bishop one time after the Owens Valley selling out to the city of Los Angeles. There were a lot of dairies. They had silos and they had some good dairies, and there was a thriving industry down in there. The land was being sold, and the city bought it up for the water that they used. They took all of the water from Bishop in the creeks, and the drainage from the Owens Valley is run through tunnels and tubes into Los Angeles. They were buying this land up, and as the city was developing they were taking the water.

A lot of those folks sold their ranches, and they'd just leave the dairy cattle there to be sold. He went down in there and picked up a whole bunch of these dairy cattle; they were young cattle. He could see an advantage to start back in the dairy business, so he got us back in the dairy business. In order to get the job done as these cows would freshen, we started in with a milking machine. That's when we got the dairy and the milking machine. We kept that going for a while, and I finally got tired of that and sold the whole business.

When did you sell the dairy operation for the second time?

It must have been in the early 1940s.

We've been talking about different types of machinery that have been important to the ranching operation over the years. Are there any other examples you can think of?

I don't have in mind anything further that would contribute except, in every instance, all this machinery has been improved on. Instead of having flat belts, in some instances they got V-belts, rubber belts. Bearings have been improved and various parts of the equipment have been improved to where they're more efficient, and you get more of the machinery to last better and does a better job. That's one of the things that we see going on all the time. Today's automobile has much improved over the old ones. Looking at it you can't see anything, but if you get in there at the workings you can find out that bearings are more precisely made. They're better placed and better designed, so that they're lubricated better and they retain lubrication—last longer. Motors and bearings are all improved.

Were you able to make the whole operation of the ranch any easier by using the telephone?

We had our own private line to the sheep camp, and my dad had his own private line into Gardnerville. He had that on account of the interference that I was telling you about. When we'd call, we'd ring the central office and then they'd ring on the main line. Then they'd hook you up to the long distance if you wanted to call Smith Valley or Yerington or Carson or Reno. They did have a line from Bridgeport to Wellington that belonged to a man by the name of Bryant. He had his own private telephone line.

Then they had a little local telephone company here. It was called the Carson Valley Farmers Telephone Company. They'd connect you to Carson City or Reno, or if you wanted to call Bridgeport they'd connect you onto Bryant's line. As time went on they developed a telephone line, and you could call San Francisco or Oakland. The far distant calls were very limited.

How was the telephone used in ranch business?

You could call up the cook house and get a hold of the cook. They'd call the boss; the phone was in the kitchen or in a room nearby. The cook or the lady, it might be in some instances, would go out and get the foreman. You'd contact the man and tell him what you wanted to do. If you wanted to get a hold of the foreman of the ranch down wherever it happened to be, contact him and give him orders or ask him what was going on. It was very helpful.

It would be employees of the Dressler operation talking with other employees of the Dressler operation?

Most of the conversation wasn't between the employees on our outfit. I might be talking to my brother-in-law or my uncle or the boss in Smith Valley or him calling up talking to my father. It wasn't conversation between the various employees because it wasn't divided up that way. The employees that we had were delegated, and they had their orders from the foreman.

I don't mean low-level employees; I mean top-level people such as yourself. What I'm getting at is that it appears that it was internal communication. I gather that it was used primarily for the operation of the ranches that you and your family were involved in.

It aided greatly because you could call up at night and leave orders, or you could call early in the morning and find out what was going on. In many cases, you'd find out whether it was necessary to make a trip or not. Sometimes a 40-50 mile trip could be avoided. The telephone was a means of eliminating a lot of extra travel.

When did your family get its first radio?

I guess the early 1920s, along in there. We had an aerial out here. I really don't know because I never did pay too much attention to radio. I'm not much of a radio fan, and my life and my time was taken up.

I know you already had electricity because you had your batteries here, but at some point you had power lines strung out here. Was that part of the rural electrification program during the 1930s?

No.

When did you get electric power out here?

We must have had power from a mountain stream dynamo at the neighboring ranch as early as 1910 or 1912.

Outside of using that for lighting, what other purposes did it have?

It ran the cream separator. It'd run a wood saw. It was all wood in those days; there was no such thing as gas and electric heating and stoves and all that. The wood fuel had to be split in the mountains and hauled down here and sawed up.

The electric power was used extensively for pumps—not pumping irrigation water, but pumping stock water for corrals. These motors took the place of gas engines which were quite a headache. They'd be all right when they were new, and then after they'd get worn they'd become unreliable and people didn't know how to run them—didn't know how to repair them. [laughter]

How were you pumping that water before you got gas engines?

By hand.

Was it one of those suction pumps?

No, piston pump, just hand pump, up and down. Some people had windmills. We never had a windmill.

What about the cream separators—what was driving those before you got the motors attached to them?

By hand, turn them by crank.

Whose job was that, usually?

One of the milkers. [laughter]

What other small appliances can you think of that would have had an effect on ranch life or on the operations of the ranch?

The thing that I would think about would be the blacksmith shop where you'd have horsepower to run grindstone to grind the sickles. Lots of sickles had to be ground in the summertime to sharpen the sickles to cut the hay; it was horse drawn.

Has the short-wave radio ever been used very much here on the Dressler ranch?

You mean for communication?

Yes.

No, we don't have any now. I could probably use one, but we've been getting by. It probably would be quite a convenience—I may still get one. I'm not against it, but I just haven't been forced to do it.

We haven't talked at all about veterinarian medicine. I don't know how much of that you practice yourself out here.

I was just thinking that the vaccination for various things that have been discovered and developed is tremendous. I remember when I was a boy we'd lose a lot of young cattle with what they called blackleg.

You could tell blackleg by touching them. They would puff up, and if you touched the animal it would sound like tissue paper underneath the hide. My dad would diagnose the blackleg. He'd send me out with some of the rest of the hands and we'd take the cattle out of the corral and drive them down country for about 3 miles and bring them back, as hard as we could run them, and it seemed to stop it. Apparently this blackleg

is a blood-related disease, so the idea was probably the stimulation and stirring them up would overcome. It would generally happen in the springtime and sometimes in the late fall.

They're inoculated for that now?

Oh, yes. Then they came along with a vaccine; the first was a pellet and you injected it under the skin right next to the root of the ear. That worked. They developed a serum; it's a liquid. There were 2 major outfits that I remember: one of them was the Cutter Laboratory in Berkeley, and another one, the O. M. Franklin people in Colorado. I think the O. M. Franklin people are the ones that originated blackleg vaccine. It's generally used now.

When do you start using it?

We do it when we mark and brand the calves; give them a shot of blackleg.

When did that stuff first become available?

I'd say in the early teens.

How many cattle would you lose every year to blackleg before you started inoculating?

It didn't hit us every year. Sometimes you'd lose 8 or 10 before you'd wake up to what was going on. You'd find one here and one there... just kind of disturbing. After they discovered and developed the vaccine, we didn't lose them. If you're diligent, careful and do a good job vaccinating, I see no reason why you should lose any except unusual cases.

Have there been any other major advances in animal health care?

All animals do get anthrax; they've got a vaccine for that. They've got, in this country, what they call red water. It was first thought to be anthrax, but was finally developed through the University of Nevada. A man by the name of Vauter came right out and made some observations and stayed right with my father on our summer range where they were dying, and developed a vaccine. It's a product of any vaccine people that make serums or vaccines today, but a lot of it was developed and discovered by the University of Nevada by Dr. Vauter in the early 1920s.

Are there any other important advances in health care that are worth talking about?

Yes, there are. There's the matter of brucellosis and tuberculosis. Our veterinary medicine people and our universities are doing a very commendable job on observing and keeping track of animal health.

What percentage of your herd do you lose to disease every year now?

I can't contribute that we're losing any cattle through disease. We may lose them inadvertently through disease if you happen to get it, but they've practically eliminated cattle that we own—brucellosis or tuberculosis—but they come back and retest every so often. That's the means of keeping track, keeping up. So far we've had several tests conducted where they prove clean. Well, that just means that you haven't had it, and hopefully you're not about to enter it.

About what percentage of the Dressler herd was lost in disease every year in the 1920s?

You might lose 2 or 10. The year that Dr. Vauter was so active and helped work with my

dad and other people in the area, there were many people losing them; we lost about 110 head of cows the year that that was developed. That inspired them to get busy. [laughter]

How did red water affect the cattle?

They get a kind of fever and they just drop over dead.

You could take in and name some serums and vaccines that relieves and treats pinkeye. Pinkeye is an infection that gets in the eyes and, if it's not treated and handled properly, the animal may lose its sight in both eyes. It's a terrible thing. The eyes puff up and get infected and break a big puss right over the eyeball. When it heals up the scar tissue covers over and the pupil can't function. It's probably transferred from animal to animal with flies. If you don't get the animals that are affected out of the herd, it spreads more rapidly and more extensively.

Is there any one year or any group of years that stands out in your mind as being the best?

I don't remember any year that was supremely outstanding or supremely low. I do remember that in 1924 we had to buy hay; we had to move cattle from one place to another. We may have sold down. Along with some of this, I think I've failed to inject the idea of low prices. That was during the Depression. I remember when my dad sold some beef heifers for \$.03½ pound, and cows for \$.02½ a pound. It could've been \$.05 or \$.06 for steers.

How do the 1920s and 1930s measure up to the other decades?

We've received much more money in the later decades than we ever received in the

early, but our overall expense was less in the early days. I remember when we were able to cut the hay and stack it, from the time we put the mowing machine in the field till we got the hay in the stack, it was \$1.75 a ton. And I'm afraid if you would figure out the cost of cutting and baling and stacking the hay today, you'd run yourself into not less than \$40 a ton. That takes in the cost of machinery and the interest and wages and all. So when you look at it, we've evolved gradually with some ups and downs to where we are. It seems like the more money that's available, the more you need. So I don't know the answer.

If you had to pick a period in which to be a rancher, what would it have been?

I liked it better back there when we had horses because there was more people available, and the people that did come out to go to work for us were ready and willing to do what we'd tell them to. They were more able to do what you wanted them to do, and they had more know-how and seemed more willing to put in the time. Today they don't want to put in the time, but they want the money. It's up to some of them to go get the money wherever they can find it because it don't come to us fast enough to distribute it.

* * * * *

When I was a boy my father had Mud Lake. It was smaller than it is today. As he advanced and developed and took in more acreage, he saw fit to enlarge and build a bigger dam. He had intended to make it bigger in the first place, but somebody blew the box out in about 1908. [laughter] They put some dynamite in and blew it up... let the water out and injured the structure that was there to hold the water back. That was a big, deep

water box in a trench in the original Mud Lake.

Mud Lake was just a pond; it would get water in it and then dry up during the non-runoff season. My dad bought it from a man by the name of H. H. Springmeyer. He owned some of this land as well as some of the land that my dad originally bought from his Uncle Falcke. That's what started what we call the Dressler flat, the Falcke ranch or the sheep camp; we had different names for it. After this thing took place, my dad got a man by the name of Whitney from California who was a threshing machine man. He used to come here in the fall of the year and go around the valley threshing grain. He's the one who built the dam. My dad contracted with him to build it in 1908, 1909, somewhere in there, but it took a couple of years to complete it.

I remember my dad got a rock crusher, and they ran that with a gas engine. It was a big bench-like thing. They put the rocks in by hand; they had to throw them in one at a time. They crushed the rocks and put the tube in, and then they proceeded to make the fill. The first fill was done with Fresno scrapers and 4 horses.

After it got high enough, it got to where it was quite a chore to drag that dirt high up so they built some of their own dump wagons here, and my father bought a steam shovel from somewhere in California.

It was an old-fashioned steam shovel. It would propel itself by chain drive to the hind wheels. The hind wheels would be the wheels underneath the boiler, and the front would be the ones where the boom was. It didn't swing clear around; it had a great big, long platform on 4 big, flat wheels. It had to have a water buck—a man to haul the water and coal to it. It had to have a fireman, an engineer, a boom swinger and 2 pit men. They used it to dig the dirt and load the wagons.

They had a cook house up there. The cook house is sitting right here in the yard; I can show you that. They had to haul drinking water up there. This threshing machine man had square tanks that he used to haul water for his steam engine to run the threshing machines. He used to haul water from the Fay ranch where there was a creek. He could fill the tanks rapidly. After he'd load the wagons over here at the Fay ranch, he'd take them to Mud Lake to provide drinking water for the cook house and the kitchen and domestic water.

You said your father never finished the dam to the point where it had a spillway.

No, we had to watch out and see to it that it didn't overflow. I did some additional work in reinforcing the dam, and built a spillway, and improved the canal and the fixtures that divert the water out of Indian Creek during the flood season.

[This] makes it possible to gather up more of the water. Water that's available to Mud Lake is somewhat periodic, and comes down at flood stage in great abundance. If you don't have a canal big enough, you lose the chance to pick it up.

Irrigation is the life blood of Carson Valley agriculture. Agriculture is the result of resources, and the resources are the land and the soil and the water. The resource as it was used by people that came here, the only water that they would have available to them would be the runoff in the springtime until the midsummer. The growing season lasts until fall in this country, so they would run short of water. The natural flow from the source—snow—would be depleted. Being no more snow, there'd be no more water. Many times, the stream and the seepage from the soil in

the mountainous areas would provide water all the year round, but not enough to supply and satisfy the demands of the agricultural enterprises that were developed here. That inspired reservoirs.

Some of the land that my dad developed had a late priority, so he was inspired to build Mud Lake. After the water was stored in Mud Lake, it became supplemental. That means the water would supplement the main stream of the natural flow that originated from the snow which was diverted up and down this East Fork and West Fork. I'm living on the West Fork. The bulk of agricultural land in Carson Valley is on the East Fork because that is a bigger stream and it draws from a greater drainage area and flows longer in the season.

In order to fill Mud Lake during the non-irrigation season, my dad acquired a right to store water out of the West Fork Carson River. That water is diverted up above Woodfords and dropped over through ditches—he owns an interest in several ditches—into Diamond Valley. From Diamond Valley it runs into Indian Creek and is rediverted through a canal and dumped into Mud Lake.

On the East Fork, several reservoirs were developed. My dad at one time had an interest in all of them, but he sold that land which is today under subdivision. But the Alpine Land and Reservoir Company built numerous reservoirs on the headwaters of the East Fork up in Alpine Valley.

In addition to the Alpine Land and Reservoir people on the East Fork, the Dangbergs had their own private reservoir called Heenon Lake. They developed that and stored water and supplemented the land out at Buckeye—part of their ranching enterprise. The Dangberg Land and Livestock Company are no more existent. It's called Dangberg

farms, but the original people are all gone. It was finally sold by the descendants of the Dangberg people.

Have you ever measured the capacity of Mud Lake?

Mud Lake is the capacity of 5,000 acre feet.

Now what does that mean to the Dressler ranch?

Well, it we start with last summer which was the most unusual water year in all my life, we didn't need Mud Lake. It's been necessary to divert and use supplemental water out of Mud Lake—in some years when we had dry years, in May; some years it was July; some years it started in August. It's a varying situation. The necessity is created by the natural runoff that this area depends on for irrigation from the high mountains.

With the exception of 1983, you needed Mud Lake at some time during the growing season every year since it was built. Is that right?

Absolutely. In some years we needed more than Mud Lake had in it.

What did Mud Lake enable your father to do once it was constructed?

It enabled him to be secure on raising 3 crops of alfalfa when [before] he could only raise maybe 1½. Supplemental water has got a great value in *any* area, but in the Carson Valley the supplemental water is limited. We have valleys and we have areas that are under irrigation districts. Most of them have adequate water on account of these supplements. But Carson Valley supplemental

water belongs to individuals, not irrigation districts. In our case, my dad owned all of it. Since he passed away, I saw [it] necessary and advantageous to sell some of the land. When I did, I sold some of the supplemental water along with the land. I'd say in general, without Mud Lake you raise a crop and a half and with Mud Lake we'd raise 3 crops. The Alpine Land and Reservoir was all owned by the ranchers, but they each owned certain amounts of stock in the system. My dad used to be one of the big stockholders in that outfit. As a boy I used to have to go up there and help divert that water... turn it loose and watch and maintain the stream flow. My dad finally sold his interest in the land that necessitated this water, so along with the sale of the land went his interest in the lake. Sometimes the people don't need all the water, and some people with newer rights were able to buy the water at so much an acre foot from the people that had excess.

There are instances I have known that somebody was trying to buy supplemental water. He wanted to finish his wheat crop that needed just one more irrigation. See, it has a very advantageous advantage to it, and that's what inspired people to do all these things on a private enterprise basis.

You told me there was a water box up there and somebody had dynamited it. Do you have any idea why it would have been dynamited?

It was done for spite, and my dad might have known who did it, but he didn't pursue the thing. That's the way a lot of things happened in the early days. If you pursue it, you make it worse.

Did any other problems arise as a consequence of the need for water in this valley?

Yes. A great deal of that took place before they got water right laws. The office of State Engineer came into being because of water regulation and water management. To begin with, water rights were established by priority. The first land that was developed on any of these streams was down in the bottom of the valley, and so the oldest rights that we have were land that was original land; it might have been flooded land that was naturally flooded to some extent, when the first white people came here to settle. Then as the water would recede, they would divert it and shut the whole stream flow off to get it out on the ground. The older rights had the priority, and they claimed the older rights. The State Engineer's Office took testimony from the original settlers. "When did you settle? How much land did you have?" And so they established priorities. Some of the oldest priorities here in the valley are 1852. We own some 1852 land that was in the lower reaches of the valley.

They'd have to establish and record all this. We have a book here that gives all that. Then they had to put water masters on for the distribution. So these men are familiar, and the water is allocated to them by priority.

But the best priority in the river, if the water is nonexistent in the stream flow, the priority don't mean anything. A dry creek isn't half as good as a full reservoir. That was another reason for supplemental value. The water is very well managed today, but during those days sometimes they'd get into tremendous battles. I remember even my father'd come home with black eyes telling me that he took a shotgun away from somebody. My grandfather told me that a man on a saddle horse tried to run over him and he succeeded in knocking the man off his horse with his shovel while he was on

the ground. He was irrigating, and this man wanted to make him stop so that he could get the water because he laid claim to it. My grandfather laid claim also, so there was a dispute.

That kind of thing can't happen today, can it?

It can happen, but it wouldn't be of any avail. There'd be no point because there'd be no chance to accomplish anything. It might happen just because 2 fellows disagreeing get in a fist fight; that can happen anytime.

I gather the water is so well regulated now that it's impossible for one person to steal water from another.

It's not impossible to steal, but they can be taken into account because stealing water carries a penalty—if you can prove it. Just like any other thing that's illegal.

I am going through the last stages of a generation. There are new generations taking over, and new aspects and new means of approach. There are instances where a lot of these farms and ranches were taken up and developed to quite a large acreage and are being cut up now and subdivided. I can see where it's going to become impractical on what was previously irrigated land, to continue distribution of water, to wet what might be from an alfalfa to a lawn. After it gets to subdivision status, it's going to be impossible to irrigate it. Just how much and when and where is problematical, but that's in the offing. That's some of the things that I can see going to take place and be substituted for an alfalfa field that was part of a 1,000-acre tract, and it's part of a 40-acre tract, subdivided into acre tract or quarter acres or whatever it might be for subdivision purposes. This is taking place

and we're evolving from large operations into that in today's world in Carson Valley.

Did your father do anything else that's worthy of note that had an engineering bent to it, other than building Mud Lake?

He went on and developed land in Smith Valley. He built the Plymouth Canal, and he bought another more improved steam shovel that didn't need so many men to run it and it swung clear around. He consolidated ditches and improved and leveled land, improved canals, drilled irrigation, drilled artesian wells that were available, set up a feed lot, did a tremendous job.

Irrigation has always been a major problem here in the Carson Valley. Your grandfather must have been one of the very first to practice it since he came at such an early time. Did he ever talk to you or to your father about early irrigation practices and principles here?

Well, he told me that there was a lot of trouble especially in the late part of the season after the main runoff had gone by and water became scarce. They'd get into fights and steal water from each other—they called it stealing, but it was taking the water out of the stream. In many cases the man upstream had the first opportunity, so he took it. And that deprived, in many instances, the man downstream who might have been the first settler. So that gave rise to having laws passed and water rights adjudicated and priorities established, so that there had to become some order.

During the course of the time that they didn't have these things and they didn't have the authority over water and all—and storage reservoirs that have been built since, and all the advancements that we live with today—

they had to make the best of it. If they got into a dispute and they couldn't settle it, they had to have a fist fight or hit each other over the head with a shovel. [laughter]

You have a rather elaborate irrigation system here now. Does it look anything like what your grandfather was doing?

It had to look something like it because it's irrigating some of the same land he had. But in addition, my father, with neighbors, built canals and enlarged the scope and took in more land, and it extended the contour so that more water was available. And he built reservoirs to supplement the shortage period.

I wondered about the diversion of water and whether or not it was legally mandated on certain days. I believe that the West Fork is regulated to a fashion.

Well, there's a situation that occurs only on the West Fork of the Carson River which we operate under. It's mandated that after the first Monday in June rotation occur. Beginning with the first Monday in June, the water is turned from California and brought down on the Nevada side of the state line where it's distributed among the Nevada users on the West Fork. At the end of the week it goes back and California helps themselves to whatever is necessary to satisfy their demands, and the rest of it flows down on this side. But most of the time the water is dropping, so it don't maintain enough flow for everybody to help themselves in California and Nevada. From then on, the water is rotated after the first Monday in June and thereafter every week about.

How long has that system been in effect?

Ever since they settled the lawsuit, Alpine Land and Reservoir suit. The water is handled that way... even the reservoirs that are on the West Fork. We're interested in most of them, and it's advantageous to use that weekabout period because if you released the water out of the reservoirs during California week, you wouldn't get it. California would take it. They have the authority to take the water in the river and you can't get it by them, so you would lose it. So we handle the water on the weekabout, and we release the reservoirs every other week. At the end of what we call "wet week," we shut them off for a week. Beginning with the next Nevada week, we turn them on again. They don't have that regulation on the East Fork.

Can you tell me something about the watermaster and the way he operates in the Carson Valley, and the impact it's had on your ranch over time?

It's necessary to have a watermaster and, whether you like the watermaster's fee or not, it's a matter that you'd have to take up with the court. We just have to endure it. But it's necessary to have a watermaster to distribute the water; there's no other way. The water has to be distributed and divided among the users based on priority. After the flow gets down to a certain number of second feet, where there isn't enough water for everybody, priority means the oldest rights. If there's only enough water in the river to satisfy the oldest right, the oldest right's going to get all the water in the river. Most of the time we've never reached that point. We have reached it a time or 2 on the West Fork.

Have you been satisfied with the system over the years?

Yes. It's a system that's been worked out among the users, and it's the only way you can do it. There's discussion and controversy at times, but it works.

I know that the storage of water has changed considerably since you were a boy. I'm curious about whether or not there have been any changes in the actual irrigation of your land, whether it's with stored water or with water that is drawn from the Carson River. Has it been handled any differently over the years?

No, it's got to be handled under the administration of the watermaster, after it reaches down to a certain level.

No, I'm not even thinking about that. You've described for me before the whole process of taking the shovel and allowing the water to more or less seek its own level out here, flooding your fields and things of that nature. Has that changed any over the last 60 years or so?

No.

What we're talking about, then, is essentially nineteenth century technology.

Using the same canals, ditches and fixtures; there's no other way to do it unless you want to pipe it through and sprinkle it and fool around that way, but I'm not interested. It costs enough to handle the surface water the way we get it, and that's the cheapest way.

We have not talked about the maintenance of this whole irrigation system. What kind of maintenance is required, how often is it required and how do you perform it?

These ditches naturally will till up, and animals walking back and forth will break

the sod, or a stick gets in a ditch, and moss and weeds grow; you continually have to have them cleaned out. I used to run a slip scraper with a team of horses—get the one horse or both in the ditch and load the scraper, then head the team up and pull the scraper load of dirt out of the channel, dump it on the bank and turn around and do the same. Today we have backhoes that you can sit on the seat and thumb your machine and regulate the bucket with a throw of the fingers.

Do you own your own backhoe?

Yes. Backhoes are quite a common thing. I don't think there's a farm or a ranch in Carson Valley that don't own one or more.

Is this maintenance on the ditches done at regular intervals or only when needed?

Only when needed.

About how often? Does it vary from ditch to ditch?

Yes, it does. A continuous-flow ditch generally necessitates more cleaning than one that's used periodic.

I'd like to talk about natural occurrences—in the order of floods or high winds or droughts, hordes of insects, anything like that—that may have affected the ranch over the years during your life.

We have had some natural occurrences. The flood in 1907 had an impact and caused some changes. The East Fork River changed its course. It used to flow under a bridge and, after the flood, it made a new channel. They had to change and put a new bridge in. That happened this side of Gardnerville.

We had a flood in 1937 and one in 1955, 1964, and some high water. There was instances where the water was running across the road on the other side of Centerville, and you couldn't travel. I think one of the dairymen there had to get his little pigs out of the pen and take them to higher ground, and a man down on the lower end of the valley had to move his wheat and grain out of the granary. I remember one of the neighbors had a dump truck, and they loaded the grain in the dump truck and took it up to the fellow's barn and stored it. Another fellow had to get his pigs out of the pen with a rowboat. Another instance, the chickens flew off the coop in the daylight—as long as it was dark they stayed on the roost—and they started to fly down like it was their habit and they drowned in the water.

There never was any great calamity from flooding in the Carson Valley. It might've changed the course of the river and made some gashes in the side of the bank and overflowed and put debris on some of the lowlands, but no catastrophe. We've never had a catastrophic flood here.

What about drought?

In 1924 I remember we just didn't have the hay crop, and we didn't have the feed in the mountains and my dad [had] to buy hay. We went over and the neighbor didn't have any livestock, so we bought his field and I cut the hay and loaded it up and brought it back to our place.

But even the drought was [just] a short water year. There were no loss of cattle, no loss of livestock, none whatever. We were always able to move around and make adjustment. If you run out of hay or pasture, you sell down your cattle or by some hay from the neighbor, or go to Mason Valley or go somewhere

where they had some. It was always available. Nobody ever suffered, except economically with whatever the cost was, but there was never any drought in here with starvation.

* * * * *

What sorts or contributions did your mother make to the operation of this ranch?

When she and my father were first married, she was doing the cooking, and feeding the chickens and doing the chores. After he started to enlarge his holdings and expand, they had to hire a cook.

During the haying season, there might be as many as 40 men working here on the ranch at one time. Is that correct?

If you relate it to the period of time when I was helping my father manage, yes. When they put up the hay on my grandfather's place, which wasn't as big a place, I wouldn't know.

Your mother would have to cook for at least 20 to 30 people, counting your family.

I don't think so.

Not that many?

In the haying season maybe—including the family—20.

My mother supervised for many years the commissary...the procuring and the ordering and making the list to go to the grocery store and buy the groceries. They didn't buy it in little dabs like you do now. They bought 100 pounds of roasted coffee. They'd buy 100 pounds of tea encased in a lead foil box. It wasn't long till they had the camps and they dispensed all that food through the camp

tenders and out to these men. He started a ranch down below here called the Falcke ranch, and my mother used to see to it that a certain amount of meat was gotten—hams and bacon.

There used to be men.. .most of the ones that I remember were old German fellows.. .who would come here in December and kill a bunch of hogs. My father would feed a whole bunch of hogs and get them ready and kill them all in a matter of a couple of days and hang them up. They'd bring the lard in and render it on the kitchen stove and put it away in 5-gallon lard cans. Some of them were coal oil cans with the tops cut out and the paper wrapped over the top. Then this meat was put in brine. They'd cut the ham and bacon and the different cuts of meat up, and they'd take and put the ham and the shoulders and the bacons in brine in 50-gallon barrels. You test this brine—I used to do it myself. You'd salt it until it would float a potato. The hams and bacons would be in there 6 weeks, [then] take them out and hang them up in the smokehouse—that was a big, tall building we used for a slaughterhouse—and smoke them.

You say that there was a crew of German men who would come around and do this?

No, it was one German man, and he'd supervise the killing. Among the crew, thered be some Indians and Basques and Dutchmen or whatever was around here on the ranch. My dad would stop all operation, except feeding the cattle, and go to hog killing. [laughter]

How many hogs did you kill regularly?

About 50.

Then my mother would take empty flour sacks that were saturated with flour, and they'd hang that sack around this ham and

bacon. They'd tie that around and put red pepper around there so that flies couldn't get in. Some of that ham and bacon used to get pretty dry before it was used, and we'd have to parboil it. I remember up in the camp when I stayed up there as a boy—I was a buckaroo for a while—we'd parboil it in a frying pan and soften it up, and then fry it and you have your bacon.

Were those 50 hogs that were butchered intended only for the use of the family and the hands on the ranch, or did you sell some of them commercially?

No, absolutely all used or consumed for our own purpose. Sometimes that wasn't enough.

In other parts of the country, very often hog killing is accompanied by a lot of social festivities. Was there that kind of gathering here on your ranch?

No. They did have that in some instances where they would kill for the family. Fifty hogs would make lots of sausage. We had blood sausage, brain sausage, liver sausage and head cheese. Then they'd smoke the jowls, boil the meat on the heads, take the tongue out and the brains out. Then they'd grind up the ears and the nose and all that; they'd make head cheese.

3

WASHO INDIANS OF THE CARSON VALLEY: A RANCHER'S PERSPECTIVE

In those days [late nineteenth through the early twentieth century] the Indian folks didn't go to school; they were just raw natives. They lived in wickiups and shacks, and they really didn't want to live any other way. That was their custom. These ranches were all settled and taken. The land was put to cultivation and fences made and all that sort of thing established, and the Indians would attach themselves and they'd live on your ranch. The white people were kind to them and it was a 2-way street. It afforded the Indians a way of life and gave them some money and an opportunity to eke out an existence. That's what everybody had to do those days. The white people shared with the Indians, but the Indians didn't know how to read or write; they didn't know how to calculate, so they would come and attach themselves or live on the ranch you owned. I remember the Joneses, Sankey, and the Walkers and different ones [Indians]. There was a family over there that stayed at Sheridan; I don't know their names, but I know this Henry Dressler and I think there was a man by

the name of Big Charlie and he had a family. I think they were attached to my grandfather's place over there.

In those days, the women folk were more shy than the men; they were very shy. If they would come and want anything, if you'd be in the house, they'd never knock. When you stand on the outside of a house you can't see in, so they would come and flatten their face right against the windowpane and get their eyes right against it. You'd see their nose flattened out against the windowpane, and they'd be looking in at you. That's the first knock that you'd get. It used to frighten a lot of people, but it didn't frighten the natives. You'd go out and ask them what they wanted.

Would you bring them in the house, or would you talk to them outside?

They'd come into the kitchen, but they weren't anxious to come in the house. That was the way they acted. Maybe they'd want something to eat, or maybe they'd want to buy something or maybe they'd want to sell

baskets; but that was the way they'd come and approach you.

Those were more or less the transient ones that were traveling through. They used to walk from Woodfords and Markleeville to Gardnerville. They had trails down through, and you could always tell where the Indian trail was because they'd wrap rags around the barbed wires of the fence and tie the wires together to make a smoothness so they could crawl between the wires, and then they'd take off in a more general direction. They didn't follow the roads; they'd just go across country. These people that were living on your place, they'd come because they were more or less attached, and they had a certain pattern. They'd come on Monday and do the washing, come on Tuesday and do the ironing. Wednesday, they'd maybe scrub the floors. They had a pattern that they followed down through a couple of generations.

Then the railroads commenced to expand and Southern Pacific had numerous icing plants.

Was there one here in the valley?

No, they'd be located on the railroad.

Did the V & T [Virginia and Truckee Railroad] have any ice...?

The V & T had nothing to do with icing. The main line transporting fruit and vegetables from California to the east had icing plants at Boca, California, west of Reno. The Indian people used to go up there in the wintertime for a period of maybe a month or 6 weeks to cut ice on the pond at Boca and store it in huge warehouses. Then in the summertime when the trains would pull in, they had icing plants. They'd roll this ice out on cars and dump it in

the reefers. These reefers had 2 trap doors on the end of the car, and they'd fill those reefers with ice to maintain coolness in the car.

Were these Washos from the Carson Valley who would go up there?

They could have been. Mostly Washoes are from here, and then there's Paiutes from Reno. I remember them. They used to leave here...bunches of them. They had facilities up there, and they fed them. The same Indians that worked for my father used to go up there, or they worked for the Dangbergs. Some of the older members of the families that predate the generations that are here now, many of them worked in the ice. They had an icing plant at Carlin. I remember one at Laramie, Wyoming; North Platte, Nebraska; on and on it went... different icing plants.

They started the Indian school in Carson, Stewart Indian School. They tried to get the Indians to send their children to school, and they wouldn't do it. I remember a man by the name of Dick Bender; he was an Indian.

He would come out and encourage the Indian folks to send their children to school. This was a boarding school. These Indians didn't have medical attention; they didn't have sanitary facilities like they have today. They'd take these little Indians in, and then they'd catch cold and transfer colds to the other little Indians. Some of them would get sick and die. Some of them wouldn't stay there. They'd get homesick and take off; walk all the way from Carson—run away and come back to their folks. That went on for a period.

How did the Indians, the adults, like that?

Some of the old ones didn't like it, but they more or less pushed it and finally broke

it down to where the ones that *did* stay would be encouraged. Then their children would be taken there; they would encourage it. It gradually wore itself into a pattern where it was accepted.

Did your mom ever help educate any of the Indians?

The only education that she had to do with the Indians was teaching them to do some of the things that she wanted done. That could be termed education.

The old Indians were characters. They were friendly people, and they'd like to josh and talk. The Indians would make baskets, and they'd come and offer them to my mother. She bought lots of baskets.

Do you still have any of them?

Yes, we do. She divided them among all us family.

They [the Indians] were very faithful, and this would give them a livelihood. They were well-paid in proportion to the ability to do their work and the ability of the farmers, ranchers and settlers to pay. There wasn't money all over the place in those days. I remember when, even on this ranch, we couldn't waste butter. If we put butter on our bread, we had to put just enough, or we couldn't have it. People had to be cautious and careful. This afforded the native Indian.

They had a special dress; they had shawls, colored shawls. They were great for color. They liked colored handkerchiefs. They bordered on material resembling silk, and they used to wear them around their head. The women had their hair cut around like bangs, even with their mouth, under their ears. They made their dresses out of calico for summertime, and in

the wintertime they had woolen clothing that they made; they made their own clothing.

They used to make these wickiups with old canvas or pieces of bark and scraps of lumber. They were made with a hole in the center and they had a fire that they cooked on right in the center. They had a small door about 4½ to 5 feet tall; they had to stoop over to walk in. The entrance to these wickiups was like a tunnel. They had a trench all the way around it and dirt heaped up so that it would shed the moisture and run away from it. That was their shelter.

They existed that way, and it afforded them an opportunity to make a few dollars and they were happy with that. That's the way they knew how to get along.

You were telling me earlier about the different sense of time that Indians have, and that sometimes Indian men would operate on the wrong schedule. What about the women; would they show up regularly?

Yes.

Were there seasons of the year when they might be off somewhere doing something else?

Well, the Indians used to go pine nut picking in the fall of the year. A lot of the families would move right out into Pine Nut, and by this time a lot of them had their own horses and own wagons that they bought from the white people—older wagons. They had to have it in good repair or they couldn't use it, but they'd do a lot of their own repair on these wagons. They'd get the tires set and sometimes get their horses shod at a blacksmith shop. They'd go out to Pine Nut and set up camps and stay out there for probably a month. They'd knock the burrs down and shell the

pine nuts out of the burrs, and come in with a spring wagon load of pine nuts in barley sacks.

Would they sell any of them to white people?

Oh yes, they'd take a lot of them to market. They'd put the burrs in the fire. The Indians had a way of cooking the pine nuts, roasting them in the burrs, before the burrs dried up. That was one way they harvested them. Those had a delicious flavor, different than any flavor you get now when you roast these pine nuts. The pine nuts you get nowadays are picked from having fallen on the ground or being knocked on the ground with poles, and then shelled out and roasted.

Did you or any members of your family go pine nut picking yourself?

No. That's a pitchy job; you get pitch all over you. They [the Indians] would never wash their hands; it didn't do any good. That pitch was more or less adhered to their hands. They'd take dirt and rub their hands in that and then roll the dirt off. Nothing wrong with it; it was just a way of getting the pitch off.

So for a period of about a month in the fall, there would be no men or women to...?

No, they didn't all leave. Some of them would go, and then some would go and come back. They were missed sometimes, but these Indian folks were never a year-round employee; they were periodic. They adhered to the habit of hunting and fishing. When they were hungry, they went fishing or hunting and they supplied their wants and quit. That was the way they worked. They worked 2 or 3 weeks or a month. They always had to take time off. They always liked

to collect their money every week; go to town and spend their money. Sometimes they'd work and save their money. I've seen them in the stores. They'd go in and cash a check, and then they'd want to buy various articles. They'd buy a handkerchief or a blanket, or shoes, stockings—all the necessities to cover their bodies—and groceries, flour, coffee, tea, whatever they wanted.

Some of them would learn to figure a bill on their own. Most of these older ladies would lay the money out, and the clerk would take what was necessary to pay for what they bought and hand them the change. They'd look at the change, figure out what they could buy, and they'd go and buy some more articles. But they didn't know exactly, so they'd lay it out there and, if it was enough to cover, they'd take it. If it wasn't enough to cover, they wouldn't take it.

Back in some of the times that I am talking about, there *wasn't* paper money. They had gold and silver coins. The coins were more available. But I never saw the Indians turn down money, any kind of money, because they know what money is. They weren't particular.

So your grandma Dressler's Indian help followed a regular schedule where Monday was washing day, Tuesday was ironing day, Wednesday [they'd] scrub the floors and windows—something like that.

Or work in the garden. That was typical of all the families that the Indian folks worked for. That wasn't just my grandmother. There were hundreds of these Indians here in the valley. That was the pattern of how they existed among the early settlers and ranchers in Carson Valley.

In the wintertime when they didn't have steady employment, they'd come and they'd

need a sack of flour. My folks would give them a sack of flour, or they'd give them a quarter of a beef. They'd supply them ahead of time. Then, come springtime, they'd work and pay you back. There was a balance of reciprocity there and acknowledgement of honor. The old Indians were honorable people.

Ignat Soos, a cigar maker, lived in Gardnerville and had a shop there. Can you tell me something about him?

He had a little one room cabin, and it was located north of the East Fork Hotel. He made cigars during the period when I was going to high school from 1914 on. I think he was Serbian. He was a bachelor.

He had a market for his cigars. Apparently, he made the kind of cigars that people would buy. He put them in boxes and shipped them out. They weren't all consumed right here.

I remember an old Indian lady called Big Annie. She'd make baskets. Her daughter Tillie was married to an Indian by the name of Snooks. Some of the descendants of the Snookses still live in Woodfords. This Big Annie would come here and ask my mother for food. My mother would have the Chinese cook, if we had one, fix a big panful of food. She'd always want tea, and always want sugar in it. My mother used to comment that she'd always want pie. If they didn't put pie in there, she'd criticize the serving. sometimes the old menfolks were more shy than the women, like this old Big Annie. She was vociferous. She'd push her way around; nobody pushed her around. [laughter]

Were these Indians on your ranch still making rabbit skin blankets? When do you think is the last time they...?

Let me see—when was Wahma's girls here; I'd say as late as the late 1920s and the early 1930s.

You don't know the names of any of the girls who were making them, do you?

No, I don't know their names. Well, Edna used to make rabbit skin blankets, and Wahma made them. Wahma was the mother of quite a large family. They lived here on the ranch for a long time, and her husband was Johnny Anthony.

What did Johnny Anthony do on the ranch?

He did everything—plow, feed cattle, stack hay, irrigate. He wasn't a cowboy. He'd drive team and help feed and do irrigating, clean ditch, he'd run the grain drill, help plant the crop. He was an expert man to drive a furrow plow—a plow that would run the furrows through the field to run the streams of water to irrigate with.

Where did he live? Did he have a camp of some kind here?

Yes, they had a cabin up here about an eighth of a mile from this house where we are.

In which direction?

The southwest.

Would that be to the west of the branch of the Carson River or to the east of it?

It'd be straight south of the big barn you come by when you come in here.

Yes, and it was what kind of structure?

It was board. My dad furnished the lumber, and they built it.

How many structures like that did you have on your ranch for Indians to live in?

About 3 main ones, and then they'd have their camps in different parts. We had another 2 or 3 more on another piece of property where we had some more Indian families north of here; we have since sold that.

Were the houses for the Washo Indians all together in one spot?

Yes, more or less. The families that we had later were more in a cluster; not right up against each other, maybe 100 yards apart, maybe a quarter of a mile. We used to have one for Edna over here; she was right on the same spot where Frederick's first house was.

You said those are the later ones, though. What about the earlier ones, were they more scattered?

Well, the earlier ones...that was before my time, but I saw remnants. The Indians built them themselves out of bark and boards and remnants of pieces of different things—old clothes. They've all been destroyed or rotted away. They were more or less temporary. They called them camps.

They were built and supported with a framework of willows—green willows, and they would have a hole in the top. They were kind of cone shaped, and then covered with dirt all around the bottom. They had a doorway and a tunnellike affair—low door and entrance, no windows. The only light they'd have in there was if they had candlelight and the light of the campfire.

Were any of those still in use when you were a boy? Can you remember anything like that?

Oh, lots of them.

How old were you when they finally quit using structures such as that?

I was probably 16, 17 years old, because there were lots of them up around Woodfords and Markleeville.

I was thinking about here on your own property.

On our own property, there were [some] about that same time. There was a family that took the name of Dressler—there was Henry Dressler—they had a camp over here. As time went on the white people would furnish the lumber, and these folks would make some cabins. Then they got the old-fashioned cook stoves, but first they cooked outside. They wouldn't cook everything outside, but even with a small stove in the house, they'd hang a kettle over the fire and boil water to wash their clothes.

When you were playing with the Washo children, did you ever go into many of the Washo houses?

No.

Was there some reason why you didn't go in?

We didn't see fit to go in there. The folks had their own way, and we didn't intrude on the Indian life. Likewise, the old Indians didn't want to come in the house either! We never did get intimate with the Indians. We always treated them fairly and got along friendly and all.

Did your mother and father tell you not to? Or did you just somehow know you shouldn't do it?

Well, they kept us from getting familiar. It was a case of the society. We didn't have any adverse feeling; it was just that that was it.

When I was a boy growing up, there came a time when I was told not to play with certain kids any more, even though I'd been playing with them from the time I was a small child. Did that time ever come with you and the Washos? Did your parents ever tell you that you weren't supposed to play with the Washos any more?

No, not in any case.

Maybe you can tell me a little bit about the most important Washo men and women that you remember from your childhood and on up through being a young adult—in fact, right on up to the very present. I'm particularly interested in people who might have been important as political leaders— those who were looked up to and respected by a number of Washos.

Well, the people that I associated with were the people that worked for us. They had their own leaders, and they associated with them. They used to come around and visit some of the people. My mother used to buy baskets from a lot of those people.

They used to have what they called Indian doctors. One of them was named Walker, and then there was Dr. Billy. I don't know whether he was a real Indian doctor or not. It was sort of a myth. If the Indian was sick they'd hang around them and wail and make them believe that they would suck some mysterious bone out of their body, and they'd work them over

and keep them from going to sleep at night and just completely wear them out and frazzle their mind. The next morning, they'd show them some object, some bone, some rock, or something that they said they took out of their body during the course of this procedure. They had that mythical effect. Then they were supposed to get well. Well, sometimes they got well, and sometimes they didn't. Those that were going to get well anyway got well, and the ones that were going to get worse got worse.

Did the Indian doctors take anything in payment?

Yes, they'd have to pay the Indian doctor.

Did he want money or things in trade?

Money. They didn't have a set pattern. The patient would owe him, maybe for a long time. Sometimes they never got paid.

In your lifetime who do you think has been the most important Washo in the Carson Valley?

I don't know. There were some folks that you might call leaders—they weren't really leaders; they were aggressive and they'd pick up and follow the advancements of the white people. There was one whose name was Tom Sallee; he went to school down at Stewart. He used to play ball, and he was recognized. He'd associate with the fellows.

At that time the Indians weren't allowed to drink. They drank whiskey whenever they could get it. Probably when they would get it, they'd drink too much of it because they were afraid it might be taken away from them. [laughter] They would overindulge in whiskey, and it makes you crazy. You don't have to be an Indian to go crazy on whiskey.

You were saying Tom Sallee used to associate with the guys, and he would I guess have a drink with them every now and then. I'm wondering what period of time you were talking about.

No, it wasn't a case of having a drink every now and then—no way. He would go and play ball.

What, basketball, baseball—what?

Baseball.

Yes? Where?

Maybe Sheridan, maybe Woodfords, and maybe Markleeville and maybe Gardnerville or Carson.

On a white baseball team?

Yes.

What period of time is this that we're talking about?

That period of time when I was in school... up till I was 16 years old.

Then he used to work for my father. He was a big, rugged man; he was an athletic type of man. He would drive team, work in the hay. I used to drive derrick for the crew for my father. Dad put me to drive a derrick, and that would be to unload the hay wagons. I always liked him [Tom Sallee] because he'd come in and knew how to fork, get his load of f and get cleaned up. He wouldn't drive the fork in the wrong place and scatter the hay all over, so I had to make 7 or 8 trips up and down for nothing; he'd get it off in 3 or 4 forkfuls, and the load was off and he'd get out of there. I'd have a chance to go and get

a drink of water. Some of these other fellows that didn't know much about it and didn't load their hay right, they'd upset and scatter the hay around; then they'd have me backing up and going forward, taking little dabs of hay up on the stack. I remember that on that account. He would take good care of his team, things like that I remember.

Did he live on your ranch?

Yes, he lived here for a while. He later went to work for people by the name of Heise. He worked for them for a good many years. He raised his family working for them.

He wasn't married when he worked on your ranch?

At first he wasn't. Afterward, I don't know, he drifted away. He was a big, rugged grown man—young man—when he worked for my dad.

Where was he born?

I don't know that. I think he was born up in Alpine County. I think his parents come from Alpine County around Woodfords. He was one of the first Indians to be sent to Carson...Stewart Indian School...one of the first ones to have been taken down there to the school and stayed there. Lots of the young folks of the Indians—they'd take them down there. They weren't all just little first grade kids that they sent down there; they were any age that they'd pick up and encourage to go there.

How did the Indian parents feel about that?

I wouldn't know because I never did hear them comment. They evidently wanted the kids to go. There was a man by the name of

Dick Bender; he seemed to be their leader. He was educated. He raised a family. He was one of the interpreters and one of the Indian people that would come out and would talk to the Indian families here and encourage them to send their children to Stewart Indian School.

Then another character. ..and he was a famous hunter; he was actually one of my great friends. His name was Tom Barber. His father was one of the Barbers that was on the west side—black man.

And his mother was a Washo?

Yes. He lived at Woodfords, and he was a famous hunter. The Indians had a ritual they'd go through. I don't understand it, but it had to do with their belief, their superstition, that they had to do certain things. He would perform that whenever he killed a deer.

Did you ever see him perform it?

No, but I know he used to do that.

Did anybody ever describe that ritual to you?

No, I never did pay much attention. They had a certain way of skinning the deer, and they had to do certain things. He used to tell me about different things, but the actual procedure never stuck in my mind enough to give you a good outline.

He used to work for US; he worked on the ranch here. He was a good cowboy; he was a good rider. He would irrigate and drive team and buckaroo.

He moved away from the ranch?

He worked for different people. He worked for us for a while, and he worked

for the Johnson family for a long time. He used to take care of their property up at Lake Tahoe. As he got older, he had his own home at Woodfords. Then he worked on the highway for the California highway department for years. When they first started opening up and developing the roads, highways, and putting in government money, the roads were all just county roads. He'd work on the road, and as they developed the highways he got a job with the highway. I think he worked his last active part of his life for the highway. He was very able; he was a good powder man.

You said his daddy was a black man, and his mother was Washo. Were they married?

I don't know.

Do you know if there were many other half-breeds, let's say, here in the valley—either half Washo and half white, or half Washo and half black? Was that common?

It wasn't too common. There were others...I don't remember. But I do remember Tom. He grew up in the valley here, and we associated. He was part of the community; everybody knew Tom Barber. He was friendly with everybody, and he used to take people out hunting that came from different parts. Some of them were people from San Francisco or some friend of somebody that was at the Lake—some of the wealthy folks that used to come up there at Lake Tahoe. He'd take hunting parties out.

Do you know if he thought of himself as a Washo Indian or as a black man?

I think he considered himself part of the Washos.

Did he speak Washo?

Oh, yes. He was raised absolute, genuine Washo.

He was raised by his mother's family?

That's right.

He didn't live on the Barber ranch, then, I take it.

Oh, no. He was an Indian.

That would indicate that his mother and father weren't married. This is fairly important trying to determine just what kind of relationships exist among the races at various times. You see this sort of thing with a number of other Indian tribes, as well. With some Indian tribes, if the mother is Indian, then the child is Indian. With other Indian tribes, if the father is Indian, then the child is Indian. But if the roles are reversed, then the child is not considered part of the tribe. I wondered whether it made any difference to the Washo which parent was Indian and which was not.

When these people are children born out of wedlock, the burden of raising that child falls on the mother, whether it should or should not. My observation is that the mother is responsible for raising the child. The child is closer to the mother than the father. The child grows up in the care of its mother, talks her language; the environment of the mother prevails on the upcoming of the child. That's the case of Tom Barber.

There were no Indian *chiefs* in here. They used to have some...they called themselves chiefs. There was Captain Pete Mayo.

He lived on your ranch, didn't he?

Yes, he used to live here.

Did he work for your daddy, too?

Yes, but they didn't live here constantly. Maybe they'd have their camp on our property and work for somebody else. Maybe they'd go over to the neighbors. Just because they lived on our property, that didn't mean they had to work for us. We never chased them off.

Then there's Benny James. He originated over around Genoa; he was a half-breed. He wasn't full-blood Indian.

Benny James was a more or less prominent sort of an individual—prominent in that he used to work up at Lake Tahoe. He'd stay up there as caretaker and shovel the snow off of houses and homes and buildings up at Lake Tahoe; he'd stay there all winter. Communication at that time was a boat, the steamer *Tahoe*, and the train. The railroad used to come into Tahoe City, and then the communication was by the boat...letters, messages sent around. Benny James was one of those fellows that lived up there.

His family [would live] part of the time at the lake; part of the time down in the valley. He had several boys. One of the oldest ones was Earl, and another one was Don, and they were cowboys; there were really riders—horsemen. They could ride broncos and they'd break horses to ride; they were really expert riders. They wouldn't get bucked off.

Was that unusual for a Washo?

No, not necessarily. It's just like among the Washos, there'd be some that would adapt themselves to that and liked the challenge. Then there was others that were more modest; they didn't want to get bounced around. They'd seek out other lines of work, but these James boys used to break horses for the Bliss family.

Some of those folks had horses in Bakersfield. Earl James used to go to Bakersfield and stay down there all winter...work on the ranches down around Bakersfield.

There was a very prominent Washo Indian in the period after the Second World War, in fact, up into the 1950s and 1960s. His name was John Dressler. What do you know about him?

I don't know too much about him. I'm not familiar with his relationship to some of the Dressler Indians that I know. They picked that name up. He was an educated person. I was to his funeral.

Were there any particularly important Washo women that you can remember?

There was Sarah Mayo. She *lived* on the ranch here. When I say they lived on the ranch, they may have lived here temporarily. Then they had relations—their descendants worked for us. They'd come and work a while. None of them would ever fasten onto any ranch and live their lifetime out. They moved around for one reason or another, but there was always a friendly relationship between my people and any Indians.

Was your family different from other families in the Carson Valley in that respect?

No. Many families had Indians work for them, and many families had their cabins. After the Stewart Indian School, then they had a separate school here at Dresserville. Today their children go to our public schools. We've gravitated or elevated or evolved into the situation where the people that they call Indians today are really descendants of the Indians. They've been educated and given the same opportunity of education that the

rest of us have because of the public schools or public money.

Let's go back to Sarah Mayo. Is she known for anything other than making wonderful baskets?

She used to do housework. Some of these old folks didn't work steady; if they needed some money, they'd get a job and they'd do it. For instance, in the fall of the year they'd go out and pick potatoes. I know in some instances with my folks and the Dangberg people, they'd go out on the flat east of Minden or out east of where we live here, and set up camps and grub brush by the contract. The men would grub it with mattocks, and the Indian women would take forks and pile the brush. Then at nighttime they'd burn it.

That was going on in your lifetime?

Oh, yes.

It sounds like pretty rough work.

It is. Not only that, but there are some folks living here in the valley that I can take you to that grubbed the brush off of the area that they live on right now.

Now what came along to replace that hand method of grubbing sagebrush?

Tractor.

They couldn't do it with a team of horses?

It probably could've been done in a way. They did do some; they'd take 2 railroad rails and they'd weld them together so they were in the form of a V. Then they'd drag that. That

was heavy, and the edge of the rail would crowd the roots, but it made a mess!

You had to pile up and run over and make unevenness in the soil. That's the reason why they didn't do it. If you grubbed them out by hand, you took the bush off; and then you could harrow the land and it was smooth. Then they got tractors, and if they did make unevenness, they'd smooth it out with a blade. That's how come they did it in mass like they do now. There isn't any real development going on to match that no more. They go at it a different way. They'll go out and stir the soil up and plow it, and then have a big rake—it's all done with tractor or bulldozer. They have the teeth on equipment, like the front of a tractor. Instead of a bulldozer blade, they've got forks that you can push along. They shove the brush out; then they tear it up. This hand work is long gone.

Paul John used to live here. When he was a young fellow my dad hired him. I was still in school and he was younger than I was, but he'd stay here in the bunkhouse with the rest of the men. He'd do any kind of work; he was just a kind of a handy boy around. He stayed here for several years, and I learned a few Indian words from him and associated with him. We worked together feeding cattle and riding horseback, and whatever there was to do on the ranch.

He could work in the blacksmith shop. He couldn't shoe horses, but he'd help the blacksmith. He'd help with the dismantling of a broken-down mowing machine—take the bad parts out and put new ones in—and stuff like that. We used to have him grind sickles. That used to be quite a chore when you were running a lot of horse mowers. He could drive a horse mower, he could drive a rake, or he could irrigate and help feed.

His dad used to work here for my father. His father's name was Sam John. He had a

brother by the name of Frank John, and he worked here. Sam John was quite a character. He used to tell myths. He'd sit by the hour and tell Indian stories. I always had a desire to get him to repeat some of these myths, then I was going to get them recorded or written up. We didn't have a recorder, but get somebody to take shorthand.

Can you remember any of them now?

Páša Páwdi is one of them. *Páša Páwdi* is the name of a bluff of rocks over here south and east of Mud Lake. It's a story about a coyote and a rat—*páša*, the rat, and [a] coyote called *géwe*. The Indian name is *Pasa Páwdi*. *Páša Páwdi* means "rat fall down." So this story is that the rat and coyote got in an argument up on this bluff, and the rat made a pass at the coyote; the coyote ducked and the rat went over the bluff.

That's what left that spill of rocks that's up there?

Yes. That's where this took place between the rat and coyote.

Then there's another one over here at the Scossa place; that was called *déek dehésk*. *Déek* is "rock." *Dehésk* is "scratched." That was a myth where the lizard and a bear got in an argument, and they were arguing over the number of fingers on a lizard's foot. A lizard is supposed to have the same numbers of fingers on his foot as a man's hand. They were arguing over this, and the lizard insulted the bear or something; then he ran in the crevice of this rock over there, and the bear scratched the rock to try to get him. That's the basic, but there was more detail to it than that.

You can't remember the detail any more?

No, but I was going to get this Sam John to relate a lot of that. Those Indian myths were stories that apparently these Indians, before they'd go to bed at night, they'd tell these little Indians those kind of stories till they fell asleep.

When would you hear these stories?

Whenever we were out talking, maybe out riding, going somewhere in a wagon. Sometimes we had to go up and do ditch work up at Mud Lake....take you about an hour to get there. You'd ride the wagon, and he'd tell those kind of stories when you were going along.

He used to take care of the irrigation here. He was a quite intelligent individual. He had great memory and could do things that a lot of other people [couldn't]—not because they couldn't; it was because they didn't pay attention. He was the kind of fellow that paid attention to what went on, and he'd learn and pick up. He had judgment, and my dad used to like to have him around. He had a camp up the river here: a cabin my dad provided for him.

Sam John had a brother; his name was Caesar John. He used to do the blacksmith's work and the drill sharpening for the county road in Alpine County. There was a man by the name of Grant Merrill up at Woodfords; he used to run the crew. When he first took over the roadwork, most of the members of his crew were these Indian folks that lived at Woodfords and Markleeville. Caesar John used to live just this side of Markleeville in a cabin right along the creek.

If you want to go into the detail of the people that lived here, there's Benny George. His wife was Edna, and the kids were Lomen George and Nina George, and Elsie, Daisy, Oni and Ombi. Lomen used to work here.

They used to live here some of the time; they'd stay right here and live in the bunkhouse with the rest of the crew. Then they'd leave and go somewhere for a while.

Lomen went out one year to be a wolf trapper with the shearing crew. He'd follow this crew around. He came back sooner than he had planned because he told me he was going through the spring. So I said, "What's the matter with the wolf trapping?"

"Oh," he said, "they feed too much chili, too much hot pepper!" [laughter]

Was it a Basque or a Mexican wool crew?

Mexican.

Spotted George was an old Indian. He used to drive around with a spring wagon and a team; he had a couple of little horses. They had these public schools located in different parts of the country. I went to Fairview while I was a little boy. If anybody went by the schoolhouse at recess or noon hour, and the kids were out playing in the yard and there was snow on the ground, they'd snowball them. Hit the horses and throw snowballs on the people. Sometimes the people would just dodge and laugh about it and go on by, but some of them would take offense.

This old Indian apparently took great offense, so he tied his team up to the fence on the opposite side of the road from the schoolhouse and took his buggy whip and come inside the school yard. The kids all ran in the schoolhouse. But that didn't stop Spotted George; he came on inside the schoolhouse, and the kids were going out the other side—some of them out the window and out past him. He was whacking them as they went by him and he scattered school kids all over the place. I was a little guy and I didn't know what to do, and I hadn't thrown any snowballs. So I just stood there, and he

eyed me. He didn't say anything to me, but he scattered the bigger ones. It was quite a commotion. [laughter]

How did your schoolteacher react to this?

She couldn't do anything about it; she just had to stand there aghast and take it in. She reprimanded the kids after they'd quieted down, and old Spotted George got in his wagon and went on.

Did any of the children's parents object to Spotted George disciplining the kids like that?

They didn't take that kind of information home with them. It was settled right there; it didn't carry any further than the schoolhouse and the schoolteacher and the kids and Spotted George. Of course, the parents would have objected, and some of the kids might have got spanked.

Then there was Wahma, and she had a large family. I don't remember the names of all those kids, because they left here and went to work for PG & E when PG & E built the Twin Lakes reservoir. They were living here on the ranch, and when they came back they went to work for the Alpine County road department, and they lived in Markleeville. For a while they lived in the old district schoolhouse up on the hill in Markleeville. They had 2 boys. I've been told that one of them went to Hawaii during the war.

Then there was another sister of Edna. I tie it to Edna because she stayed here all her life. [She] took care of the laundry and the ironing and the housework. She did that for my mother, and then she followed in and took care of it for Anna. She died here.

Is she buried on your property?

No, she's buried at Woodfords. She had a sister by the name of Pansy, and she married a fellow by the name of Harry Filmore. Harry Filmore was quite a horseman; he could handle and break horses to work. He was a steady worker for the Dangberg people for years. He used to head up their mowing crew. They had a big spread out east of Minden, and he was what they called the head mower man. He'd lay the lands out so that the mowing machines would have their lands cut out. So that they didn't get scattered all over the place, they used to lay the land out.

When it come time to plant the crop, this land in Carson Valley was all irrigated—still is. The Dangbergs had the biggest piece, and they used to have it well-managed and they used to have these crews. Harry Filmore would head up the furrow plow crew. I think they had about 6 furrow plows going.

It was interesting to watch, because each furrow plow would cover the distance between the 2 furrows. The plow was on the rig. They'd have to space and drive so that they'd leave a space—4 feet, or 3 foot 8, or whatever.

Each one of those plows was separate, and they had sticks and markers. They'd wait till number one gets going up to the field past center, and he'd put his stick there. Then the one behind him would take and measure over this 4 feet and another space and a half. The reason for the halt would be he'd stand right in the middle of the plow, and he'd look and keep the tongue of his plow right in line with these stakes. Then the next man, and they were all stepped; they'd line up and they'd drive maybe a quarter of a mile—every one of them just as straight as could be.

They were all Washo, the crews?

Most of them, yes. Occasionally a white man would take to it, but most of the time these fellows were all Washo Indians. They had the keen eye and the ability.

Over on the Dangberg ranch, Ruth Achard and Margaret McDonald were showing me the bunkhouses out in the back, and they told me that one of them was for the Washo hands and the other one was for the white hands, and that they didn't want to mix the 2 of them. Was that the case on your ranch, too? Did you have separate bunkhouses?

They'd have a separate room, but most of the Indian people that worked for us had their camp or their cabin that they stayed in. They'd come down and eat in the cook house, but they stayed with their families in their cabin at night. We had some that were single, and it depended on their attitude and their cleanliness and they'd mingle with the rest of the fellows.

Did they eat at the same table?

Yes. That old original custom had *long* since gone.

Before you were born?

No, I saw it.

When did it end?

It ended before the 1920s, 1916 to 1920.

Were there any other individual Washo Indians that you wanted to talk about?

There was a fellow by the name of Winfield Kaiser.. .very, very able man, very

good teamster. He was one of the best. Harry Filmore used to work for my dad some, but not much. Winfield Kaiser was very able, and he was very dependable. He helped my dad develop a lot of that land over here on the flat. He did the irrigating for my dad; he'd plow, drive 6-horse team, haul lumber. We had to do everything by horse and wagon, and this Winfield was a very able fellow to handling teams. He'd do the plowing and irrigating and stuff like that.

He raised a family here, and then decided to move. He ended up working over in Antelope Valley. What really caused him to move away from here was some illness among his family. In those days the medical profession hadn't reached out to these Indians, and some of these Indians were still superstitious. They wouldn't adhere to modern medical profession and take medicine; they'd believe in the Indian doctor. So it was in his case and some of the children died, so he wanted to leave...bad spirits around here. He went to Antelope Valley, and that's where he spent the balance of his life.

Did he tell your father that's why he was leaving, because of the bad spirits around here?

They just moved. He knew what the reason was. They didn't discuss those things between us.

Henry Kaiser had a large family. They lived here for a while. A lot of his descendants are still living over here in the Dresslerville area. You'll find the Kaiser name over there. Dexter Kaiser and Philander Kaiser.

You said that Edna George had lived on the ranch longer than any other Indian. How many years would that have been altogether?

She must have spent 50 years.

Did she live in the same house that entire time?

No, she didn't. She had different locations. The last one was up south here.

Is that the one she lived on longest, the last one?

Yes, she lived there for several years. It's still up there. I can show you one of these grinding rocks that she used to use. It's out there in the pasture. They date these way back to prehistoric days, but they didn't quit using this until modern days. A lot of the Indians used to like to go do it.

The Snooks family used to work for us. I don't [know] whether they had a first name or not—the father of these boys. His wife was Tillie, and her mother was Big Annie. Big Annie and Tillie made baskets and sold them to my mother. I think there are baskets right here in this house made by them.

This man Snooks, he'd work in the hay, he'd clean ditch, grub brush, and stuff like that. He wasn't much of a hand with horses. He liked to work by hand. He'd cut wood—not in the woods. They used to bring the cordwood down here, and years ago there'd be an Indian that worked by the hand saw.

It was about a 5-foot saw; a one-man cross-cut hand saw. They'd put the 4-foot stick of wood in a saw buck, and then they'd cut it in 3 pieces. He'd saw that wood and throw it in a pile, and then he'd split wood. It was a long job. Like with us, we had 50 cords of wood to cut and split. After they'd developed these wood saws, my dad bought a steam wood saw. He'd cut the wood up with a circular saw, but before that these Indian folks were available; they'd do that.

They were happy to get that kind of work. Lots of times they'd come late for breakfast;

they wouldn't come early, and you'd have to feed them separate. That's how some of this separate feeding would come about.

Their dress and their habits weren't quite as sanitary as the other folks to begin with; that's the way they were. That's how this started, and it developed from that up till now they're familiar and they're on a same basis of anybody else. But our folks and our people, we never had the feeling that the Indian wasn't as good as we were. They have a right to live same as we did. It was their ability and the environment they were in before we came and before my forefathers came. That was what they had to make of it.

* * * * *

Why don't you tell me something about the food and food gathering. You've mentioned that some of the Washo women were still using mortars. Can you describe what you may have witnessed with the use of them?

I've seen them grind acorns, or see them grind wheat.

Where would they get the wheat?

They'd go around in the fields after the binder had been around. The machinery would leave some, and maybe the horses would push some down, and the heads would be missed. These old Indians would go in there and strip those and throw it in the basket and take it home. Sometimes they'd fill a barley sack.

They'd take that home, and then they'd thresh it—take a stick and flail it out. They would take and lay it on a canvas and beat it with a stick, and then put that in a basket made like a curved scoop. They'd pick it up and throw it up in the air and blow through

the kernels while it was suspended—just keep repeating that.

Blowing the chaff away?

Yes, blowing the chaff away, up and down, up and down, up and down. Maybe a cupful or a couple of handfuls of this grain was mixed with chaff that had been worked loose, and if they'd go hitting it too much it'd crack it. They'd get that loose and take the kernels that were left and dump them in a container and get some more. Then when they got that all done, they'd beat out some more. They'd put that in a sack and store it in their camp.

If you put too much in these [grinding] stones here, it just pouches out and you waste it. They'd throw enough down in there, so that when they worked this rack, it'd slide up. They used to watch it, and they'd have a little grunt too—heh, heh, heh, heh, heh, heh, heh. I guess that was maybe to give them more oxygen so they could continue. They'd just keep that up until they ground it as fine as you want. That was whole wheat flour.

Would they use it to make bread then?

Oh, sure.

Did they make their bread any differently from the way that white people did?

I don't think so. They may have made more of a flat sort of thing.

Who did you see making the wheat bread?

I think it was Peggy's mother.

Peggy who?

Peggy, the mother to Edna. There was Peggy's mother. She used to come here; she was a very old lady. She couldn't talk English. She could maybe ask you just 1 or 2 questions and maybe answer them. They could understand you, but if you talked to them, they would get somebody else right away. She was a very old lady. There was Peggy's mother, and then Peggy, then Edna and Wahma and Molly and Pansy. I don't remember any brothers; they were all females.

We've talked about the use of the bedrock mortar, and you said that there were a number of them here on the ranch scattered around.

Yes, these Indian folks knew where there was one of these close by. There'd be Indians from a certain camp would use it certain time.

So they didn't necessarily make it themselves; it was already there.

They'd use the one that was established. If they needed shade—summertime—or a different time when they needed shelter, they'd put these willows up, and then they'd cover that with rags or old canvas or different pieces of material that they could find. Most of the time it was old overalls. They'd open them up and put them on there—and old coats or maybe...not so much cowhide; you didn't see too much of that.

They would build them next to the stones?

Yes, they'd cover it over; then they'd go inside there and work in the shade. Temporary, but similarly constructed to the old original camps.

They'd take and put these sticks in the ground 15 feet apart. Then they'd take flexible

green willows that grow along the ditch; the type that they make baskets out of. They'd use them to tie these pieces together so that they'd stay.

Did you ever eat any of the food they were making?

I've tasted acorn flour and acorn soup, but I never ate any of their food.

What other kinds of food would they have been eating at the time that they were on your ranch?

They were not prehistoric; the food that they ate, in my time, was all white man's food.

Were they still bringing in venison every now and then?

They liked to get it, and they'd eat it when it was available. They used to like to go hunting. But I never knew of any Indians that existed wholly and solely on their own natural food. They had it and supplemented it, because they liked it. It was a way of life. Like in the springtime, they'd go up to the mountains and get wild onions. You can tell these little Indians clear across the room—their breath—eat wild onions.

Did you ever witness a rabbit drive?

They used to have them. That passed out not too long ago.

Did you go on any?

No, I never was on any.

Did you ever watch one, though?

Yes, sure.

Tell me what you remember about it.

The Indians would conduct a rabbit drive. A whole bunch of these Indians would hunt with shotguns. In my time, they were all done with shotgun. They'd line up from here over past the Indian cemetery. They'd line up clear across that flat. They'd move not too far apart so if they'd stirred up a rabbit, some of the hunters would see him. I never hear of any of them getting shot; they were careful, they're good huntsmen. They'd shoot the rabbit; they didn't just get excited and shoot each other. Whoever got the rabbit would just tie him on his belt. I've seen them after they've gone across the flat have 5 or 6 rabbits tied on them.

There aren't that many rabbits out there any more, are there?

Not any more. They used to hunt the rabbits out east of Gardnerville, out east and north of the Dangberg property. They'd go from there clear to Carson. Then they'd go clear down there to Hot Spring Mountain. They'd start up at the Buckeye or north of Dangberg reservoir; they'd gang up through there, and they'd go clear to Hot Spring Mountain.

Did they do that in one day?

Yes. Somebody would come pick them up. It was interesting, but there was no mystery to it; anybody can go do that.

I understand they had a rabbit boss—a man who would organize these drives. Do you know anything about that?

I suppose they did. Just like a bunch of us that get together and say, "Now you guys line up over here, and you over there" . . . have

a general understanding. But the Indians that I knew didn't have any mythical bosses or anything like that. They may have in years gone by had different tribes where the boss would tell them, but that's just somebody's idea. I don't think they conducted themselves under jurisdiction of anybody.

They'd line up and organize themselves. They may have had rules and regulations that you get so many rabbits, so they'd get them evenly divided; they may have done that.

What about the Washo kids, did they ever take squirrels home [after they had been out hunting with you]?

No, the kids didn't pay much attention to that. The older folks would eat squirrels, but we didn't pay particular attention to gathering them to eat. The food they ate at that time was beef and pork or whatever we had on the ranch, but the older ones, I remember, used to go out and get squirrels. Some of those older Indians would have their own dogs, and they'd run these squirrels into a hole or into a pile of rocks and locate them. These gray squirrels have a habit of chirping. [The] dogs would bark, and the squirrels would answer them. The dogs would dig down; many times they'd get the squirrel or else they'd locate them. The Indians used to take and split a stick—a willow stick—and then poke it down to where they would feel the squirrel, and then twist it. The fur and the hide of the skin of the squirrel would get wrapped up on this stick, and then they'd pull him out.

How did they cook them?

I've been told that they would roast them, put them in the fire and cover them with coals. The ones that I noticed how they did cook

them, they'd skin them and clean them just like we do.

Did they have any use for the squirrel skins?

Not the squirrels, but they used to for the rabbits. They used to have rabbit skins, and they'd make blankets and robes.

The rabbits that they would get, they'd take them home and skin them, and hang the skins out and let them dry, and then twist them so they were like a rope. They'd peel them off in such manner that they could utilize them. They had some way of sewing these different strips together.

They'd make the blankets, and they'd sleep in them or on them, and wrap up in them. They never washed them. They had to throw them away. You can imagine how they'd smell in the springtime. [laughter] They'd hang them out and let them flutter in the wind. That would freshen them up.

Do you know if any of the Indians on the Dressler ranch kept gardens?

No. They never made [a] garden unless they were paid to do it.

Did they eat vegetables?

Oh, sure.

But only if they were cooked up here?

They'd take some home—carrots or onions. The Indians like onions. Potatoes, onions, carrots, turnips, corn, beans, stuff like that.

But they never grew any of that themselves?

Some of them did. I can't say no because up around Woodfords, some of those Indians

had their little plots. Some of them over there at Dangbergs might have had some plots, but it wasn't a general practice. It was carelessly done and neglected. Not to blame them, but you've got to irrigate this. You've got to pull the weeds. They tried it over here when they put this land in that they call the Indian ranch. They tried it; they had a community garden. Everybody had his row. Pretty soon somebody didn't pull his weeds; somebody didn't irrigate his, and then when it come time to harvest it, it's hard to tell who took what. So it was a failure.

Let's talk about any kinds of tools, any devices that might have been used by the Washo to ease their labor. What kinds of things did the men make that you can remember?

They'd make moccasins, and they would tan the buckskin.

How would they do that?

They would soak it, and then they'd pull the hair off. I think they had a stick with an edge cut on it. They used to use wood ashes, regular white ashes; they'd put that on. Then they'd work it and work it and work it. Did you ever see a piece of buckskin?

Yes.

I've got a remnant here that I got from an Indian, and I've kept it for strings, you know? It's tough. But it's pretty hard to find that any more.

* * * * *

They [the Washo Indians] used to go over on the Krummes blacksmith shop lot. There would be some open space behind the shop, and they'd go out there and spread blankets

down and sit around a circle and play hand games and Indian games, as well as cards. The Indians used to know how to play cards.

Was it just men, or did they bring the women in, too?

Women and men. Sit there by the hour in a circle.

Do you have any idea of what they found so appealing about the back lot of the Krummes blacksmith shop?

It was in town, and it was off the street. It was just a vacant spot; just happened to be that there was a right location. They could go to the back of the East Fork Hotel where they had a Chinese cook and get something to eat. They never ate inside; they'd eat out back. They'd go to the back door and get the Chinese cook to bring them some food, depending on how many they wanted fed. They'd just get bread and whatever the vittles were; all the food was put in a pan and cups for coffee. In some instances, they'd give the Indians tea; they'd drink tea in an empty quart tomato can.

Were the Washos paying for this?

They'd pay for it. They'd give them just the regular food, but they wouldn't set it up on the table with knives and forks. There'd be bread and pie and beans. They'd set some of the beans up in a dish or a side dish. And they'd all eat out of the same dish; you'd give them spoons. They might give them a knife to cut the meat, but they'd eat with the hands.

Were they not allowed in the dining rooms?

They didn't want to go in there. They wanted to be outside. The primitive Indian

people weren't denounced. They were helped by the people in this community. The white settlers thought a lot of them, and depended on them and treated them with a lot of regard. But those people were not used to being in a house, and there may have been instances where they'd been in their wickiups all winter and they smelled like sagebrush smoke, and maybe their sanitary condition wasn't such that would be inviting to have them in the house. Generally they kept themselves as a group, and it was their nature. As they became better acquainted and as time went on and they went to school and they were given an opportunity to build themselves up, they were welcome. We had Indians sitting at our dining room table. But in the beginning, the Indian men—a regular part of the crew were all Indians—liked to sit at a separate table. We had a table on the porch where we served the Indians. They wanted to be that way; they felt more comfortable.

Due to the conduct of some of these people, the Indians weren't allowed to get whiskey. If they got whiskey, it seemed like they'd overindulge in liquor, and they'd fight—they'd fight among themselves; they'd fight the white man; they'd fight anybody. They'd be around town in the daytime, and then toward night some of them would get drunk. There was a time in Gardnerville, I remember, when they had a curfew. That was when they started using automobiles. It was necessary for them to be out of town, so they wouldn't be running their automobiles after hours and be driving drunk.

Were there any other places where Indians congregated in Gardnerville or Minden?

The telephone company had a building across the street from the JT Bar. Some of them used to congregate back in there because it was an open place and a Chinese cook

would serve them. They would find places where they would be served the food they wanted, the way they wanted it. If there was a vacant lot, they'd sit down there and eat.

I have to say there are no more Indians, because what about some of us people that originated in Europe? What about the Italians and the Dutchmen and the Danes and the Irishmen and the English and all the people that came here? We're all foreigners here; our origin was from a foreign nation. They had to be naturalized to become people of the citizenry. The Indian were the original people. Now they've been processed with our culture for 5 and 6 generations; the people who are here now are not the Indians you talk about as Indians. I remember the Indians because they couldn't talk plain English. They couldn't write nor read. They made their own moccasins. The womenfolks made their own clothing from buckskin because that's all they had. I remember when the mercantile stores sold lots of calico and woolen goods. These Indian women would come in and buy it and make their own clothes. They were great for shawls; they used to like colored shawls. And they had handkerchiefs—big, silken-type handkerchiefs—colored; they'd cover their head with that. They never wore hats. The men used to have hats. They preferred a black hat with a straight, wide brim.

Was that type of hat in style among non-Indians at that time?

No, not exactly in style; they were available. Some people would wear them, but it seemed like that was more or less Indian.

When did these Indian congregations end?

It had to end after 1930 and along in there. Before that the Indians had their

congregating places. They'd come into town with their cone-shaped basket. It had a strap that would hold the basket right below the shoulders, and the weight of the basket would hang down their back from the shoulders with a strap around...it'd go from one side of the basket up the other, and around up over their forehead. They'd put that strap around their forehead and trudge along. Lots of times they had their groceries and they'd put it all in that basket and carry it home.

The women didn't like to ride horseback. They weren't dressed to ride, but some of them would. I've seen the old man riding a horse and his wife walking behind with a basket of groceries on her back, going home. They had their little mustang horses or some horses that they would buy from the ranchers, and used them in a spring wagon or a buckboard. Most of their rigs were 4-wheeled wagons. Some of them would have a 2-horse wagon with a high seat on it, and then there would be 5-10 people in it.

The Indians, they'd love to gamble. They used to go to town, and they had a guessing game. There was 2 bones. One must have been the bone of a deer or a small animal, a foreleg. They'd cut that of f about the length that would fit across your knuckles and they'd put that in their hand. One of them had thread wrapped around it—black thread—through the center and an indentation so the thread wouldn't move away from that spot, and the other one was free. They'd play this under a blanket. They'd work it back and forth, and then they'd reach back and they'd change hands that was behind them, and then they'd come back under the blanket. When they got through with that go-around, then they'd guess. I never did follow up the rules, but I used to see them sit hour after hour.

Then they learned cards. These old Indians knew cards, and they'd play cards by the hour. They'd gamble among themselves.

Where would they go to do this?

Oh, down in Gardnerville, Sheridan, Centerville, Carson City.

They wouldn't do it out in the fields here?

No.

I mean around their camps?

No. They used to do it up at Woodfords. A bunch of them would get together where there was a kind of a community center.

What would be a community center for them?

It'd be Sheridan, and the Gardnerville blacksmith shop. They used to be over there gambling when I went to high school.

That was the Krummes blacksmith shop?

That's right, behind the Krummes blacksmith shop or alongside of it. It'd depend on where the sun was shining. They would be on the shady side, if it was summertime.

Where would they go in Sheridan?

Right across the road out in the field, right across from the old hotel.

Was there any shelter out there?

Used to be a water trough there and a hitching post where all the people used to congregate and go get the mail and go in

and have a beer or 2 and have a game of pedro. I remember the old-timers used to do that. I remember them talking about it, my grandparents.

What is pedro? Is that a card game, too?

Yes. She [Anna Dressler] knows how to play pedro. [laughter] Her father was a great pedro player.

Do you still play?

Mrs.Dressler: Oh, I don't play cards at all. He won't play cards, so we just don't.

But she used to play pedro. I don't know anything about the damn game! [laughter] I can play a little poker, and I used to play casino with her. [laughter] I don't even know how to start that any more.

Did the Indian women play any games?

You bet. The Indians were as bad as anybody. They'd play.

What did they play? Same games as the men played?

Yes.

Would they play with the men, or would they separate by sex?

Oh, they'd be mixed up.

Did the Washo men or women or children participate in any kinds of sporting activities?

They had a football game of their own. They had a ball...looked to me like it was made of sock.

About the size of a small grapefruit, maybe?

Yes. It was kind of oblong, and they used to kick that around.

Did it look like it had the same rules as white man's football, or did it appear to be something of their own invention?

Something of their own. They must have had their own rule. I just saw them play it; I never did watch them. I just saw that when I was a little boy. They must have had that, and I've been told that they used to have foot races. Maybe they had wrestling, but there's no record of it that I've ever witnessed. Do you find that in any other part of the country?

Yes. You find particularly stick ball games in the Southeast and in the East.

Stick ball?

A very elaborate game that's played with balls and sticks or with balls and baskets.

One time my mother had us kids in a buggy—she'd had us down to visit our grandparents down at Mottsville— and we had to go through Sheridan. On the way home I saw these Indians. They were stripped down to their waist and barefooted, and I asked her, "What are they playing?"

She said, "Indian football."

They were kicking this ball around, and we went on by. They were playing over the fence in a field. They were wrestling with each other and shoving each other around, and trying to kick the ball to a certain direction; then others kick it the other way. That took place at Sheridan.

Other than the football games, is there any other sporting activity of any kind? Did they race horses, that you can remember?

Not to my knowledge. As a boy, I grew up in a certain environment, and my scope wasn't too big. I was contained within the operation of my dad's ranch. The people that he hired to work—like the Indians that I've told you about—were the ones that I come in direct contact with. There were other families and other Indians in other parts of the territory that were related, and I used to hear about them but never [had] any direct contact.

What other forms of recreation did the Indians have that you know of? Was there ever any dancing?

The dance was a part of their ritual, a spiritual deal. Apparently, it had to do with the girls' age of puberty. They'd make them go out here with a stick and build a fire and notify the whole community that was it, and then they would have a dance at that girl's home. Most of the time it was done that way; sometimes other Indians' homes.

Did you ever see any of the dances?

Yes, I've seen lots of them. I've seen them here; they've been right here on the ranch right up here by Edna's house. They go around in a circle, and they have a tune they sing, a rhythm. They get together, a man and a woman, around [a] big circle. They just go around like this: *háwa·, háwa·, hawí· ninó·, wí· ninó·, háwa·, háwa·, yak, yak, yak, háwa·, háwa·, háwayinyinó·, yínyinó·*. [laughter] Go around like that all night!

That must have been a nice thing before [the] white man introduced whiskey. After

white man introduced whiskey, it would end up in a big old brawl.

Mrs.Dressler: I remember one time they had one up here, and Willy Jacks...it was Daisy, wasn't it?...hit him over the head with a coffee pot! [laughter] They had a big time!

It's kind of gone out, some of these people our age—hers and my age—they used to participate, and they did a nice job. They did a hell of a job of cooking. Those Indian women, they can make cake, and they can make cookies and prepare food and bake bread and salad. God, they'll put on a spread. The Indians, you know, their ability to cook and prepare the food would match anybody. Then the flamer probably would outdo some of these fancy cooks today because a lot of this fancy stuff like cakes that some of these newer, modern recipes waste sugar. But those folks, they'd prepare food that was really tasty. They'd have steak....

Mrs.Dressler: Great apple pie.

Yes, apple pie.

Mrs.Dressler: And their pie crust was just the best ever.

Did they make the pie crust in any different way from the way that white people do?

Mrs.Dressler: No. It's just the way they handled it that it came out right. Beautiful.

There's one more Indian that was quite a character in this part of the country; his name was Emory Arnot. I think they took the name from the Arnot family; there was a judge by the name of Arnot in Markleeville.

He used to stack hay for people, and he was a great woodcutter. He cut wood by the cord for different people.

Did he ever work for your family?

Yes, he worked for us, but he was mostly up in Alpine County. He worked for Anna's father, and he worked for the people up in Fredericksburg—the Gansbergs and the Bassmans. Then he hung around the Woodfords area. He liked to contract work. He'd work sometimes during the hay time, he'd work stacking hay, or he'd work in whatever it took. He was a great fellow, very honorable fellow, too.

I'd like you to tell me about the general relationship that existed between the Washo Indians and non-Indians here in Carson Valley.

There never was any [bad] feeling among the white people and the Indians in this area, no such thing. When they talk about the people coming into town, there was a time there when automobiles were coming in, and some of these folks would get intoxicated and drive automobiles. They'd get out on the road and they were a hazard. Those were instances that created a situation, and in Gardnerville I remember they had a curfew or some darn thing, where they had to leave town at a certain time. But it was for their own protection. There were several of them killed on the road by their own people—ran over. They'd get into trouble amongst themselves. No trouble existed among the white people and the Indians, no such thing in this part of the country.

There were instances just like 2 white men don't get along. It might've been a white man and an Indian didn't get along; they'd get into

a fisticuff. Or maybe some of them would get intoxicated, and they'd get hard to handle. I've had them be intoxicated, and my father would have to take them to task and work them over, and they'd take them to jail. They'd be back working on the job with my father in 2 days! There was no such thing as a deep-seated feeling or animosity, to my knowledge.

The feeling was sympathetic. It stands to reason that the people who were then the Indians were not cultivated as the people they call the Indians today. They had to make the best of it with each other, which they did. These people that they call Indians today, they're really, as far as I'm concerned, not Indians as such. They are the descendants of the Indians, the same as the rest of the people that came here. Every one of us stems from a foreigner—every one of us. They're all foreigners. My people were all foreigners; they come from England, Scotland, Germany. They had to come in here from a foreign country. They originated in foreign countries. We've come in here and down through the years with the kind of conduct that we've had, we've developed what we have. So my feeling is that there is no feeling—there should not be any feeling. If there is, it's only incidental between maybe some one or another. But general feeling, no, never existed.

4

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON NON-AGRICULTURAL PURSUITS IN THE CARSON VALLEY

My grandfather owned a blacksmith shop over in Sheridan. He rented it out to a blacksmith, and they did custom work. Nearly every farm or ranch had a private shop where they had their anvil and forge and many of them did their own horseshoeing. But most of the heavy workhorses were shod by blacksmiths in the central area. There was a blacksmith shop in Genoa and [one in] Centerville. And one of the larger ranches—the Dangbergs—they had their own blacksmith shop and had lots of horses and did their own blacksmith [work, but] they didn't do custom.

Custom work is where you have a blacksmith shop, and you do work for anybody that comes along that needs a tire set or spokes replaced or wagon wheels repaired or different things that existed in those days.

Would the man who owned the blacksmith shop have first call on the services of the blacksmith? Would your grandfather have top priority?

I don't think so. He'd have to wait his turn. If you want to maintain customers and keep goodwill with the people that you want to come to your shop, you don't shove them aside and get your own self in their way.

Now you said that most of the heavy workhorses were shod at central blacksmith shops, such as the one in Genoa and so forth. Does that mean that they were not shod at the little custom blacksmith shops?

Well, all these various places. The reason that I mentioned that they had a custom shop was I remember [it].

Apparently there were people that knew how to shoe horses, and they'd learn right here. In those days, the young fellow that wanted a job in the blacksmith shop went to work for the blacksmith, and the blacksmith he was working for would show him how to do the work that he needed done in his shop. And that's the way this thing was carried on. Young fellows grow up; maybe they didn't

want to work on the ranch, so they'd rather be a blacksmith. Well, they'd go to a blacksmith shop and offer their services and work for the man until they became proficient in doing the work that man directed them to do, which would serve in his shop—shoeing horses or fixing wagons. And then there were people called wheelwrights that knew how to build wagon wheels, and that took a special training, special art and science to do that. There was a lot of science to a wagon wheel.

In your lifetime, or even in the stories that were passed down from your grandfather, was there one particular blacksmith in the Carson Valley who had the best reputation?

I wouldn't know because they were all good blacksmiths. They could do the work. And if you lived in the Genoa community, you'd get the services of the man nearest to you because it took a long time to go from place to place. My father used to send me down to Centerville; about 3 miles north of here on the crossroad what's today 88 and Brockliss Lane. It first belonged to a man by the name of John Rieman. He employed about, besides himself, 2 men. A helper in the blacksmith shop and a specialty horseshoer. The blacksmith himself would hammer the horseshoes out and shape them and fit them. The shoer would trim their feet, and the blacksmith would take the shoes over when they were hot and touch them on the hoof of the horse, and make a mark to test the size and the shape. And he'd finish shaping the shoes, calk them—did what they called "calk and toe." They'd tip it down, and then they put a bar across the toe underneath, and that was the calk and toe so they wouldn't slip and they'd wear longer.

There was quite a bit of horseshoeing. There were big, heavy work shoes and light

work shoes, front shoes and hind shoes; and they all had a number. A certain horse would wear a number 2 or 3 or 4, and they had Ss and Gs—great, huge shoes. Each shoe was nailed on with 8 nails, 8 holes along the side of the shoe.

The shoes were made of a light steel, and they had a groove along the outer edge of the shoe, and then in the bottom of that groove would be the nail holes. And a horseshoe nail is cornered; it's flat and pointed, and the tip of the horseshoe nail had a shape that if you drove that horseshoe nail in the wrong way, it would go back in the horse's toot and never come out. You had to know which way to set that nail so that it would come out so they could clinch it on the outside. There's a space in there and a depth in which this nail is supposed to penetrate the horse's foot so that they don't get deeper and draw blood. If you draw blood, you make the horse lame. And this was a science that had to be followed.

On each side of the horseshoe on the outside edge, every so far would be a rectangular hole small enough to take the bit nail. These nails were wedge-shaped [and] had a pointed tip that had a kink in it, so that when you put it in the right direction—you had to have that judgment, according to the horse's foot and the horse's hoof—that would be driven. That's where the science of horseshoeing came in; these shoers knew what direction to set that nail when they started driving, so it would go in through the hoof and turn and come out. They'd cut the end of it off and tip them down, and then put a short stubby hook on them and cut the tip off and bend them down, so that they'd do what they called clinch. And that would hold the horseshoe on.

When a good shoer nailed the horseshoe on there, sometimes they'd stay on there for 6 months. They'd have to go and get the horses

in and pull the shoes off. If they were working on the road, driving, pulling freight wagons, sometimes they'd lose one or they'd wear them out, and the teamster would stop at a blacksmith shop along the road. There were blacksmith shops in Carson that took care of shoeing on the teams, and there were 2 of them in Gardnerville. One was the Krummes blacksmith shop.

About where was that located?

You know where you and I parked our cars this morning when we ate at Sharkey's? That's where it was. It took in most of that area that's parking lot now. The shop and yard and where they'd park their equipment and wagons outside the shop [were there].

Lots of times they'd take a wagon—take the rack off if it was a hay wagon or take it apart if they had an A-frame—and they'd crank it up with a cable, hold it, suspend it, take the running gear in or pull the wheels off and roll them in and remove the tires to repair the wheels or reset tires. But if the tires were kept in repair and replaced often enough and carefully enough, the wheels would last for years and years. But if they were carelessly neglected and let the tire fall off...the minute the tire would fall off a load on a wagon and you keep going, the wheel would crush, fall down.

When was the Krummes blacksmith shop torn down?

It was torn down, and Helberg put a garage there, a man by the name of Henry Helberg. I don't remember the date, but Krummes's shop and the lot were removed. In those days a blacksmith shop had an open doorway, swinging doors or sliding doors; you could move equipment in one corner and

out the other or lead horses in and tie them to a wall. The horses would be stood on a shoeing floor so they wouldn't [be] standing in the dirt.

Was it made from wood?

Yes, probably 2½-by-12 inch plank thick. A shoeing floor was a platform to work on.

Now you said there was another blacksmith shop in Gardnerville. What was that?

The shop that I remember was a man by the name of Chris Nielsen. He had a blacksmith shop about a block and a half south and on the east side of the street, kind of catty-cornered across from what used to be the old Richford Hotel.

Was it as big as the Krummes blacksmith shop?

Bigger. There was more activity there for some reason. It was probably handier for them to stop the teams. I used to see teams stopped there, and sometimes they'd just stop for an hour or whatever time it took to replace some shoes on one horse. These teams were [12-16] animals. The rest of the team would stand there and wait for the teamster. Sometimes those things happened. If they had to have a lot of work done, they'd put the team up and stay overnight.

Was the blacksmith trade open to everybody?

Anybody that wanted to learn the trade. A lot of the older Indian people knew how to shoe horses. But I don't remember any of them having a steady job in a blacksmith shop. They've [the Indians] got the greatest mind and hand coordination of anybody that you'd ever want to meet. I was raised with

them. Whatever they were doing they had a method. They didn't do it with sudden jerks; they were very smooth in what they did. If they cleaned a ditch, if it needed widening, they widened it and every time they took a shovelful it was properly removed. If they stacked hay, they'd lay it in layers, so when it was done it would lay there and the water would shed off; not just dump it in heaps like too much of the time was done. They had that faculty, and a lot of them knew how to shoe horses. We had a man working for us; he could shoe. His name was Winfield Kaiser.

He was a Washo?

Yes. We have pictures of him.

Was he born here on your ranch?

I don't think so; I think he was born up around Woodfords. When I knew him, he was working for my father and my father had a cabin for him, and he raised his family right here on this ranch.

What did men do when they went down to the blacksmith shop other than just have their horses shoed?

Well, naturally they would socialize. A man might go in there and get his saddle horse [or] his buggy team shod; he'd be on the road. And everywhere there was any centers, there was always a saloon so they could go over and have a drink or 2 while they were waiting. I used to see that.

I understand that teamsters often were sources of news, since they did so much traveling.

No, I don't think the teamsters were a source of news. [The] teamster was a fellow

that rode the wheel horse and sat there next to the wagon and swallowed a lot of dust, and he didn't have time to talk and gossip and carry news. If they went to Carson to load their freight wagon, they may have contacted people [to] get together and visit. But by the time he got to Bodie, it would be old stuff.

They'd try to have stations spaced a certain number of miles apart. Like they'd come from Carson to Gardnerville. I don't [know] whether they came to Genoa first or not, but I don't think so. They'd get up maybe 2:00 in the morning and harness up and take off. Get their wagons loaded, maybe take 2 days or 3 days to load the cargo. They'd have 2 wagons, one hooked behind the other... big long, big heavy wagons would mostly be 14-16 animals. I used to know some of those teamsters. One of the last ones was a man by the name of Henry Hellwinkel. He's related to a lot of these Hellwinkels here in Carson Valley. He drove a team for a man by the name of Fritz Sarman. He owned the flour mill.

Where was the flour mill?

It was over here on the river, located on what now belongs to the Washo Indian tribe at the head of the valley up above and across the river and south of the Settelmeyer place. It was ran by a slow-motion waterwheel. They moved it from there to Gardnerville, and it was while they were in Gardnerville and before that this Hellwinkel drove a team for them.

Tell me the kinds of things he was hauling, and where to.

The reason for the man to own the team was to deliver flour. They'd manufacture flour, and they'd have bran and shorts and

various products from the wheat that they got. And they'd use the bran for hog feed, and sometimes mix it with milk and feed it to calves in the dairies.

This whole community, every farm or ranch had a dairy. The agriculture that existed here in the early days had to be animal agriculture because there was no way to transport the product of the crop, except these teams, and grain was limited. If you raised animals, you had an outlet. You could walk them to market. And hogs would be hauled in wagons. Had to get up early in the morning to be careful you didn't haul the hogs in hot sun, [or] they'd overheat and die. Cattle and sheep walked overland to Carson City. The only outlet before the first wheels would be put on would be the railroad wheels. There were no trucks.

There were 2 flour mills. The first flour mill before the one in Minden was up at the south end of the valley. It belonged to a man by the name of Pete Heitman. He was quite an enterprising man, too. He had teams on the road in order to dispose of his flour. After the flour was manufactured, he'd deliver it to Bodie and Bridgeport. Some of it went to Smith Valley, and spread out into the mining area. And of course, they hauled flour to Carson.

David Park was a partner with a fellow by the name of Hansen in a sawmill, which I guess was up behind Genoa, wasn't it?

No, it was located not too far north of Mottsville against the hill. Dave Park, my mother's brother, and William Hansen, who was my mother's brother in law—married to my mother's sister Eliza Park—had started this sawmill down at the foot of the grade, about a mile and a half or 2 miles north against the mountain below Mottsville

cemetery. They had timberland way up high on the mountain. They logged up there and drug the logs down to the sawmill. They used to haul them down on a wagon or drag them.

Was it a prosperous sawmill?

It was for a while, then my uncle had a serious accident. He was fixing a piece of harness, and he got a piece of metal in his eye. That spoiled his life; he had to quit. They sold the sawmill to people by the name of Celio up at Lake Tahoe. They moved the mill up there, and then my uncle went up there and ran the engine for the Celios. It never materialized to be much on account of my uncle's injury and inability to carry on.

But my uncle, William Hansen, took up a ranch right next to where the sawmill was located. He ranned over there and raised a family. He died, and my aunt moved to Carson City where she lived, retired, and the ranch has since been sold.

Did either of them have any experience in sawmilling before they went into partnership on that?

My uncle might have worked in a sawmill somewhere, but I doubt it. My uncle, Dave Park, was quite mechanical and it was probably his idea to start with. They owned the trees on the mountain, and they could see where there was room to sell lumber. Lumber in those days had to be produced either in this area and distributed around here, or come from Hobart Hills, Lake Tahoe, and shipped in on the railroad. By the time they built that mill, there was a railroad in Minden. Most of the lumber came from north of Reno up in the Truckee area—Hobart Mills and Sierraville, Loyalton, and was shipped in by

rail into Carson City. They started a planing mill here, too.

When was the sawmill erected, and when was it finally sold and moved up to Lake Tahoe?

I think the sawmill was closed down and moved up to Lake Tahoe somewhere along around 1910. I don't think it lasted more than 2 or 3 years.

I remember old hermits and old people. Down there at my grandfather's [Park] place, there was an old man by the name of Geer Lowe. He'd stay there, and during the wintertime he'd work for my grandfather a little while and maybe go over in Gardnerville, attend bar a while; he'd be around. They were characters. It's hard to tell what their past life was. We were told as children to always be respectful and always talk to these old people. Some of them were alcoholics, and they would be in terrible shape sometimes. But they had their place in the world, and they were highly regarded. They talked to us kids; they were always kind to us.

* * * * *

One of the things that inspired me to like to be a cowboy when I was younger was I used to see other men like my uncle. My father's brother was one of the great riders in this country. His name was Dolph Dressler. He'd make a bet that he could ride a bucking horse. He'd tie one stirrup up, and he'd ride him with one stirrup and scratching with the loose leg side. He would ride them. He'd ride up through Genoa. He liked a beer once in a while, so he'd make a bet for the beers; he'd make the colt jump over the water trough, and run him over and jump over the water trough and then have a beer. [laughter] He was great with horses. He knew how to

handle them. I used to admire him and I used to try to handle the horses the way he did.

I got to hear about different cowboys. They used to always talk about Winfield Miller. He was a black man, and everybody admired him because he could *really* ride a horse. They used to say he could put two \$.50 pieces on the bottom of his stirrup and never lose those \$.50 pieces under his toes and ride the bucking horse to the finish.

[In today's] rodeos these boys are subjected to some terrible jerks and yanks. But years ago when you were a buckaroo, you rode the horse till he quit bucking. That taught him that he couldn't get you off, and that's what broke a horse.

I had all those challenges, and I used to admire and I used to want to be one. That's how I got interested.

I'm interested about some of these other famous cowboys. You were telling me about your Uncle Dolph being well known, and the fellow Winfield Miller. Was he from Carson Valley?

Yes, they were both born and raised here. Winfield Miller grew up on what's now the Scossa ranch.

He was still active when you were a young boy?

Yes, but they had sold out. By the time I got to know him, he had left here. I never saw him perform. They sold the ranch and went to Carson City.

Were there any other black families here in the valley?

Yes.

Can you name a few of them?

Parmers [The name is actually Palmer, but many Carson Valley residents use Parmer as a type of nickname.] and Barbers. Ben Parmer.

Where was his ranch?

His ranch is the first ranch north of the... where there's still a big barn...Scossa ranch. Next to that was the Barbers. Then there was some Barbers that had a ranch up in the lower end of Diamond Valley. I remember seeing some of those people, but they were older than my dad and my uncle. They died out.

What sort of relationship was there between them and the white ranchers here in the valley?

Just like anybody else; part of the community.

This old man Ben Parmer, he used to have a whole herd of hounds. He used to like to play cards, and he'd go to Sheridan where he'd tie his horse up to the hitching post among all the rest of the neighbors that would go there for their mail, and sit down and play a game of pedro.

The old hound dogs would all lay around under his horse. When they would get done and ready to go home, then he'd get on his horse and the dogs would all go with him. These dogs used to go up in the mountains hunting, too; you could hear them baying. He used to have to kill a horse or crippled cow or something some of the time to feed the dogs. This is what I was told. I remember as a boy, my mother taking me down to where she lived to visit my grandparents, I did see the dogs and I saw Mr. Parmer. We were told to call him Mr. Parmer.

Very little is known about any of the black families in this valley. Is there any other information you can provide about them?

They just fit into the community. They were good buckaroos. They put up the hay, and they irrigated and they moved the cattle across the river in March. They used to drive their cattle out right past this house where I live. Then they'd bring them back in the fall. I remember one called Benjamin Barber; he was a buckaroo—he broke horses. There were some relatives. There was an old lady. They used to call her Aunt Charlotte. She was very hospitable and the neighbors always went there. They'd be invited over to Aunt Charlotte's for dinner, and vice versa. They were just a part of the community.

Did anybody ever talk about how they wound up here in the valley to begin with?

I think they were originally freed slaves from Missouri. The black people, some of them, were given freedom before the emancipation.

Did they come out here at about the same time that your grandfather did?

I don't know anything about it, but I picked up and I do have an old axle and a hub of a wagon that apparently must have been on one of the wagons they used to come here. I own the land right now that they used to own, and this was picked up down in the field. I brought it up here; I've got it stored. It doesn't have any nut on it, just a pin.

Were there any other famous cowboys in the valley that are worth talking about?

There were others, yes. I didn't know them, but I used to hear about them. Another one was my wife's cousin, Fritz Neddenriep. He actually did the buckarooing and the cattle management because the herd was

large enough, and there was a variety of the operation; it was the H. F. Dangberg Land and Livestock Company. All of his time was taken up managing the cattle. They had probably one of the best herds in the state at one time. Their ranch was one of the most well-managed, best laid-out, fertile productive areas in this part of the state—probably the best.

They have since been sold. The older people passed away, and there was no boys to follow up. It was just a matter of evolution.

* * * * *

About the time you graduated from high school, the United States was being swept by a flu epidemic, and I know that Nevada suffered from it as well. Do you have any memories of that?

This flu epidemic was devastating and many people died. My dad had a dairy at that time, [and] 2 of the milkers passed away. They closed all the schools, and they made it mandatory that everybody have a mask tied over [their] nose and mouth; you'd be arrested if you didn't. They turned the high school into a hospital.

Did any members of your family come down with the flu?

Oh, yes, we all had it at the same time right here in this house. My mother had her hands full. I don't know how my mother withstood all that.

Did your mother have it, too?

No.

What about your father?

No.

Can you recall how you were treated?

They mostly fed up and kept us in bed for 2 weeks. I remember the terrible headaches. You were down and out, could hardly walk.

* * * * *

Can you remember what the first garage or service station might have been here in the Carson Valley?

The first real garage that was in Carson Valley was the C.O.D. Garage in Minden. Then there was a man by the name of Helberg had a garage; he sold automobiles in Gardnerville. C.O.D. stood for Clarence Oliver Dangberg. The C.O.D. Garage faces to the north, and they drive in. It's the entrance into the tire shop and the north end of the garage. Then there's another door that you drive in for their mechanical work. The old original garage is still standing, but it's all been built around, except the face.

Now it seems to be separated into 2 different agencies: on one side there's a Shell station; on the other side there's another type of gasoline station.

The C.O.D. Garage sells 2 brands of gasoline—Shell on the north and Union on the south. It's all one agency.

I think that the Hellwinkel family owns it now, don't they?

That's right.

About when did they buy it from Dangberg?

They've owned it for years, but Clarence Dangberg sold a half interest in his garage to their father, Fred Hellwinkel—the father of Donald and Dan. As time went on, the Hellwinkel family bought the Dangberg interest out. They became sole owner.

That's an example of a boy going to work and staying on the job and staying in the same place because he went to work for Clarence Dangberg as a mechanic, and he stayed there all of his life. As time went on, he evolved to be the owner of it through buying out and paying his debts off. He had to go in debt to start with.

Did any of the local blacksmith shops try to convert to garages or gasoline stations as most of the people in the valley began to convert from horses to automobiles?

No. None of the blacksmith shops did.

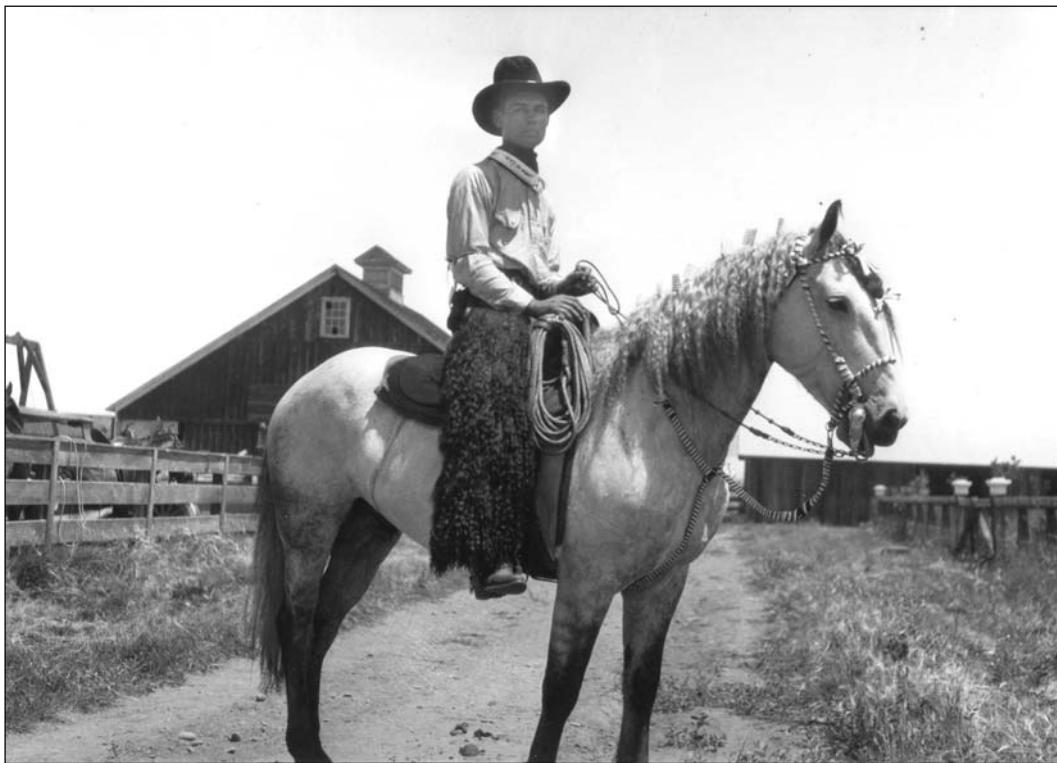
They just slowly went out of business?

Yes. There are places where some garages do have machinery...mostly trucks. As far as the automobile industry and cars and servicing cars and all, it seems as though the garage is a garage and the blacksmith shop is a blacksmith shop. The garages do have a blacksmith shop corner in a lot of them—have the anvil and the forges. They used to do that, but the forge has gone more or less out of business because any heating to do that's necessary in a garage is done with a torch or gas, not done with the blower and the coal.

PHOTOGRAPHS



William and Margaretta Dressler and family, ca. 1910. On
burro, l. to r.: Carroll, Erwin, Lucile, Myron and Fred.



Fred Dressler ready for Independence Day parade, Gardnerville, 1922.



The Dressler home ranch, ca. 1900.



Steam powered thrashing machine and crew on Dressler ranch, ca. 1910.



The Douglas County Creamery, ca. 1900.



Washo women whose men were employed on the Dressler ranch, ca. 1910.

All photographs courtesy of Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno Library:
the Fred H. Dressler collection.

APPENDIX: MEMBERSHIPS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND AWARDS

LIVESTOCK ORGANIZATIONS

Nevada State Board of Agriculture: member, July 1946-April 1971.

Nevada State Cattle Association: charter member of board of directors; president, 1950-1952; honorary director at present.

Nevada Hereford Association: charter member of board of directors, 1944-1969; president, 1948-1954; honorary president, 1954.

Nevada Junior Livestock Show: pioneer in establishing the show; member of the board from 1945 for over 2 decades; past president, 1945; in 1983 still an active bidder and supporter of the program.

California Polled Hereford Association: charter member of the board of directors, 1946 to the present.

American National Cattlemen's Association (ANCA): longtime active supporter and member; chairman of legislative committee, 1958-1960; chairman of national forest advisory committee before that; first vice-president, 1958-1959; twenty-sixth president, 1960-1961.

American Hereford Association: member, 3 February 1921 to the present; member of board of directors, 1956-1962; served on classification committee, joint APHA certificate committee, show classification committee, advertising committee and research committee.

American Polled Hereford Association: member, 1967 to the present.

National Cowboy Hall of Fame: member of board of National Cowboy Hall of Fame since its foundation in 1954; named first president of Cowboy Hall of Fame, 1957;

member of 4-man committee that selected the site of the Cowboy Hall; vice-chairman, National Cowboy Hall of Fame, 1960; elected president of National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center at Oklahoma City, 1965; inducted into the Hall of Great Westerners of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City, 1982.

AWARDS

Nevada Cattleman of the Year, 1954. Distinguished Nevadan Award from University of Nevada, May 1960.

Awarded a commemorative medal authorized by the President and Congress for outstanding contributions to agriculture, 1967.

Citizen of the Year for Carson Valley, 1969.

1980 recipient of National Golden Spur Award, 19 September 1980.

Outstanding Citizen Award, given by Carson Valley Chamber of Commerce, 1981; honored as Carson Valley Leader of the Year, 1981.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

West Fork Farmers Union, secretary, 1920s.

Douglas County School Board, elected in 1932, retired in 1960.

Minden-Gardnerville School Board, elected in 1944.

Farmer's Bank of Carson Valley, director, November 1950.

Carson Valley Soil Conservation District, member of supervisory board, 1954.

Joined with 8 other Nevadans to form Transwestern Life Insurance Company, 1958.

Nevada State Board of Stock Commissioners, veteran member, 1946-1961; chairman, 1960.

Citizens Advisory Committee for College of Education, University of Nevada, 1961.

MISCELLANEOUS

Started purebred Dressler Hereford herd with first polled Hereford bull bought in 1919.

Dedication and naming of Fred Dressler Field, high school field in Gardnerville, 1964.

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A

Agriculture, 9-10, 44, 90-91, 150, 211-213, 250-251; equipment, 86-88; livestock, 85-90, 100-101, 111-112; transportation of products, 5, 85-86, 89-90, 107-109, 127, 132-138, 153, 157-159
 Anthony, Johnny, 199-200
 Arnot, Emery, 240-241

B

Banking, 106
 Barber, Tom, 206-207
 Basques (Carson Valley), 103-104
 Bender, Dick, 193, 206
 Big Annie, 198-199
 Blacks (Carson Valley), 206-208, 255-257
 Blacksmithing, 6, 87, 88, 166, 243-249, 259
 Buckaroo, 126-135, 253-257; clothing and equipment, 130-132

C

Chinese (Carson Valley), 102
 Clothing, 14-15, 23, 69, 130-131, 194, 230, 233-234
 Cook, Eliza, Dr., 18, 20, 29
 Cook, Margaretta, 21-22, 24
 Cook family (Carson Valley), 20-24

D

Dairying, 20, 88-89, 160-162
 Dangberg, H. F., 94-95

Dangberg Land and Livestock Company, 110, 144
 Depression, 55, 142-145, 147
 Dressler, Anna Nedenriep, 12, 43, 46, 54, 66, 121
 Dressler, August Frederick, 1-13, 15, 24, 81, 97-98
 Dressler, Dolph, 100, 253-254
 Dressler, Margaretta Ann Park, 27-30, 46, 50, 53-54, 57-61, 68-73, 75, 102, 121, 186-187, 193
 Dressler, Wilhelmina Dietz, 1-3, 8, 10-12, 15-16, 97
 Dressler, William Frederick, 4, 9, 27-28, 30-31, 48-59, 68-69, 74-75, 106-107, 116-117, 120-121, 139
 Dressler family (Carson Valley), 12-14, 27, 29-30, 59-60, 63-64, 68-70, 81, 97, 121; relations with Washo, 202, 211, 222
 Dressler ranch (Carson Valley): Depression, 143-145; equipment, 66-67, 139, 150-161, 163, 166, 172-173; farming, 61, 83-85, 92-96, 157; land, acquisition of, 6, 97, 104, 106-107, 149-150; livestock, 45-46, 82-93, 95-97, 99-105, 107-128, 130, 132-138, 140, 149, 155-158; livestock diseases, 111-115, 160-161, 167-170, 187-189; Mud Lake, 171-177; ranch hands, 43-44, 56, 146-148, 199, 204-205, 213, 219, 222, 248-249; utilities, introduction of, 63-66, 163-166
 Dresslerville, 74-75
 Droughts, 186

E

Education, 32-33, 45, 58, 71-

73, 193, 205-206, 211; school board, 77-78, teachers, 35-36, 45, 59

F

Family life, 15-16, 23, 24-25, 30-34, 41-45, 58-59, 60-66, 68-71, 99, 121

Farming, 9-10, 92-97, 154-155, 218-219

Floods, 185-186

Flu epidemic, 1918, 257-258

Friday's Station (Lake Tahoe), 19

G

George, Edna, 221

George family (Carson Valley), 215-217, 224

Germans (Carson Valley), 12-15; discrimination against, 36-37

H

Hansen, William, 251-252

I

Isola, Louis, 116, 122-126

J

James, Benny, 209

John, Paul, 212

John, Sam, 213-215

John family (Carson Valley), 213-215

Jones, D. R., Bishop, 3-6

K

Kaiser, Winfield, 220-221, 249

M

Marconi, Ralph, 124-125

McCann, J. C., 111-114

Miller, Winfield, 254

Mills and milling, 26, 95-96, 251-253; Dressler mill, 122, 156-157; Hansen-Park sawmill, 251-253; Minden mill, 26; Park flour mill, 26-27

Mormon dissenters, 17, 24

N

Neddenriep family (Carson Valley), 12

P

Palmer, Ben, 255-256

Park, Dave, 19-20, 251-252

Park, Hugh, 17-18, 21, 24, 97-98, 99-100

Park, Rebecca Cook, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23-24

Park family (Carson Valley), 17-20, 21, 25-27

S

Sallee, Tom, 203-205

San Francisco: earthquake and fire, 1906, 46-50

Schutzenfest, 14

Sheridan, Nevada, 6-8, 18

Soos, Ignat, 198

Sports and leisure, 31, 33-34, 37-41, 43-44, 74; horse racing, 83-84

Spotted George, 216-217

Structures (Carson Valley):

Armory Hall, 39; CVIC Hall, 39, 41; C.O.D. Garage, 258-259; Dressler ranch, 6-7, 200-201; Jepsen stable, 42-43; Krummes blacksmith shop, 246-247; Masonic Hall, 41; Nielsen blacksmith shop, 247; Valhalla Hall, 39, 41; Washo, 194-195, 200-201, 219, 225

Sutton, Evelyn Cook, 20-21

T

Transportation, 37-38, 40,
42, 66-67, 85-86, 89-91,
96, 107-109, 134-135, 153,
192, 234-235, 258-260; ice
plants, 192-193; teamsters,
249-251

V

Vaquero, 125
See also: Buckaroo

W

Washo: alcohol and, 204,
232-233, 239, 241; baskets,
234; children, 33-34; cloth-
ing, 194, 239, 233-234; diet,
224-226, 240; education, 193,
205-206, 211; employment of,
16-17, 21, 51, 62-65, 99,
102-103, 146-147, 190, 192-
193, 196-198, 211-213, 218-
221; family life, 208-209;
foraging and hunting, 195-
196, 221, 223-230; games,
204, 235-238; gathering
places, 231-236, 239;
housing, 194-195, 200-201,
219, 225; myths, 213-214;
medicine, 203, 220; rabbit
skin blankets, 199, 229;
relations with non-Indians,
33-34, 74, 190-191, 201-
202, 208-209, 211, 219-
220, 222, 231-233, 241-242;
rituals (dances), 239;
tools, 223-225
Water: allocation, 76, 176-
183; irrigation, 51, 180-
181, 183-185; storage, 173-
176
Women, 16, 61-62, 185-186
Wood cutting, 97-99, 222
World War II, 144-148

